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of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

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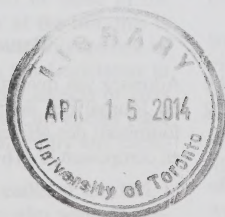
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 9 April 2014

Mercredi 9 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR AND MPP ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA TRANSPARENCE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC ET DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / *Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to be participating in the leadoff on this very important piece of legislation. I want to talk about how the bill fits into the overall context of a number of initiatives of our government. But for those members who have been here for many years—certainly I've spoken to those in the public service. When they take a look at the bill, this is one of the most comprehensive, far-reaching pieces of legislation that I think has been seen in this Legislature in quite a long time. It touches on so many aspects of government operations and initiatives, but it all comes back to the same theme of openness, accountability and transparency.

At the outset, acknowledging the breadth of this bill, I do want to thank a number of people who worked tirelessly on bringing this together. First, I am the sponsor of the bill, as Minister of Government Services, but those who have gone through the bill will note that it touches on a vast number of ministries. So I want to thank the team at the Ministry of Government Services who worked so hard on pulling the bill together, but also in terms of working with other ministries, with senior officials, with lawyers and with a whole group of people to make this

bill a reality. I want to thank, of course, my staff in my office and the Premier's office—everyone who worked to pull together this very, very comprehensive piece of legislation.

I also want to extend a special thank you to one of our colleagues here in the Legislature: the member from Ottawa South. The member has been a huge, huge advocate for transparency in government. We're aware, I think, of a private member's bill that he brought forward to this Legislature some time ago on greater transparency when it came to MPP expenses. This has been one of his themes since his election in the recent by-election, and I want to congratulate him and thank him for the work he has undertaken, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, to give you notice that I'll be sharing my time on this leadoff with the member from Ottawa South, Mr. Fraser.

I also want to give credit to my parliamentary assistant, Mr. Qaadri, the MPP from Etobicoke North, who is tied up with an announcement this morning but will be speaking to the bill later on. He, too, has had a hand in pulling it together.

As I said at the outset, I want to provide members with a bit of context of how this fits into the entire Open Government Initiative that was announced by the Premier last fall. It's funny—those who heard about Open Government thought that it was somehow an invention by this government. Well, the fact is that the idea of Open Government is an international movement. You can go to western Europe, to the United States, states within the United States, virtually throughout the world and find this whole idea of Open Government. What Open Government means—there's really a number of different parts to it.

The first part that I always like to talk about is, how do we make decisions? What is the decision-making process vis-à-vis the public? For too long, I think there's been this view that government has all the answers and the role of the public is to sit back and call on government to solve all their problems. As you and I both know, Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislature may know, one of the great secrets we have here at Queen's Park is that we certainly don't have all the answers. We live in a very complex society. Government does not have all the solutions to a problem. In fact, in many ways government doesn't have the wherewithal to solve all the problems that are happening. Often times, it has to be done in partnership with ordinary citizens, with NGOs, with the business community, with other levels of government. So we need a capacity to reach out and engage the public, to make sure that they understand that government, as I

always say, is not an us-and-them proposition, that we're all part of government, that everyone has a role and a responsibility. When it comes to so many of the challenges that are facing government, how can we work together in partnership to find those solutions and to execute those solutions? That's really the framework for Open Government.

Within that, though, there are a number of propositions. The first proposition is, if you want to engage the citizenry so that they can help be part of the solution, that they can have a role, you have to make sure that they have an understanding of the problems and challenges that are being faced. That leads to the second part of the Open Government pillar, and that is open information: to allow the public to have more information on the problems and solutions and proposals etc. that are held within government. How can we have a whole different mindset where the public has access to that information and understands the sort of challenges that we're facing, and, as I say, what are the proposed solutions, what are the facts of the matter?

The third part of that, one that's related, is the whole idea of open data. As well as general information that government has, we have this whole issue of data. The government collects literally thousands and thousands and thousands of data sets. Those are everything ranging from geospatial information to, on the other end, the other extreme, the most common boys' and girls' names for new babies here in the province of Ontario. We collect thousands and thousands of data sets, and those data sets are of great value. They're of great value to researchers, to public policy advocates, to anyone who is interested in being a part of the public policy process. They're also, as an important aside, very, very important to entrepreneurs, because much of that information can be taken and it can be meshed and melded with other types of information. You can come up with products and services which experts tell us—I'm not making this up—could lead to billions and billions of dollars of economic growth. So part of having open data is not just making the data available, but making it available in a format that is machine-readable, that is user-friendly and, as I say, can be combined with other material and put together.

So there are the three principal pillars of Open Government. One of the initiatives that the Premier highlighted and began last year was appointing an Open Government panel. Under the leadership of a noted expert particularly in the area of citizen engagement, Dr. Don Lenahan, who's with the Public Policy Forum. The panel itself was composed of a number of leading experts, including our former colleague Norm Sterling, a former member of this Legislature, to look at this whole issue of Open Government. Their report was released about a week and a half ago, and certainly we're taking their recommendations very seriously.

The reason why I began with that is, I think you can't understand the bill before us today without understanding Open Government. The bill, I wouldn't say, flows directly from the work that was done from the panel; instead, it

complements the work that was done from the panel. As I said, the panel is looking at how to engage citizens more, how to make sure that they have access to the type of information and data that they need.

0910

But the other thing is, if we're going to engage citizens—if we're going to make them more a part of the process, if we're going to make them true partners with government—I would argue that, as well as having the information about government, they also need to be able to trust their government. They need to be able to know that there's a level of transparency about our activities, and that there's a level of accountability over what we do. It's crucial, because that relationship can only be joined through a mutual trust between citizens and the government. As I said right at the outset, the government knows that we don't have all the answers and we need to rely on citizens.

The genesis of Bill 179, as I say, complements very much what happened with Open Government. That is, we have the panel who are doing their work and we have a number of initiatives that are going on with the government, but at the same time, how can we make sure that we complement this work by ensuring that there's a level of trust and a level of accountability between citizens and their government? Hence Bill 179, which, as I said at the outset, I think is one of the most comprehensive bills, which touches on so many areas of—I'll put it in broad terms—accountability, transparency and openness. What I wanted to do today, Mr. Speaker, is touch a little bit upon some of those areas and fill members in on what's in this very comprehensive bill.

I'll begin with ourselves: elected representatives. I think everyone realizes that the old adage is very true: You have to lead by example. The fact of the matter is that people look to their elected representatives to be accountable to them, particularly when it comes to the spending of taxpayers' dollars, so one of the provisions of Bill 179 is a legislative provision that would mandate that we have expense reporting for elected representatives.

The proposed bill, if passed, would make it mandatory for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their staff to post their expense information online. Currently, this expense reporting is done on a voluntary basis. I know, having been both a minister and a parliamentary assistant, that over the years my expenses have been online. Although most people think it's legislated, it is in fact only done on a voluntary basis. The opposition leaders have been a bit more spotty as to their posting, but at the end of the day it still is voluntary. What this bill would do is it would make it mandatory that not only these expenses go to the Integrity Commissioner, who takes a look at them and makes sure that they are all aboveboard, but that in fact they are posted online so the public can see the way in which their tax dollars are being spent on the expenses of parliamentary assistants, cabinet ministers, obviously the Premier, and the leaders of the opposition and their staff.

Now, it doesn't just stop there, with those members—we'd call it the executive on this side and the leadership across there. We are also proposing to extend this idea of reporting to all MPPs in the Legislature. The way it works right now is, every year, the Speaker of the Legislature actually publishes a broad expense reporting of all the members here in the Legislature: both their expenses tied to their duties here at Queen's Park—perhaps they have a residence here at Queen's Park, if they live more than 50 kilometres away—and, at the same time, the expenses that are incurred in their riding at a global level. This document is published; it is made public. I understand it's circulated to reporters in the press gallery. Certainly as an MPP I receive one. But I think members in this Legislature may be a little shocked to know that it's never put online anywhere. Presumably, someone could call the Speaker or another legislative office and get a copy, but we don't put it online. So the first step we want to do in terms of transparency is to put it online. In fact, I've reached out to the opposition parties—I've had some positive feedback; we're still working on it—to put this document online. I should add, before I go on, that we on the government side have taken the initiative of posting this information online already, as a sign of our wish to be more open and transparent.

The second point would be to broaden—and that's what this legislation does. It broadens the information that is posted and made available. So the bill, if passed, would require the Speaker to move further than what he does right now, which is just more of a general overview of the expenses both at Queen's Park and in the riding, and post online information on MPP expenses concerning out-of-riding travel, related hotel expenses, meals and hospitality expenses. Mr. Speaker, I should explain that the reason these categories were chosen is that they mirror very much the types of reporting you've seen from cabinet ministers and parliamentary assistants and now, of course, from the leaders of the opposition.

Many of the other expenses—I think members would agree; they, of course, are very familiar with them—are what you might want to call static expenses: the rent for your constituency office. As I say, there's a global figure that you can look up. But in terms of expense item by expense item, these are key areas where there's some genuine public interest on the ways in which members are spending taxpayers' money. As I say, we've taken the first steps on this side by posting some of these general figures. We're looking forward to the passage of this bill to have more specific iteration on a going-forward basis of some of these very specific expenses.

The third thing I'd like to talk about in this bill is the whole issue of compensation for senior executives in the broader public sector. We understand the concern on this side of the House. I think we all understand the concern. These have been tight times. The middle class has just gone through a very, very serious recession. People are struggling to make ends meet, and at the same time they are often outraged, in some cases, when they pick up the

paper and learn the salaries of senior members of the broader public service.

It's been a topic that's been debated in this House, and there have been numerous bills that have come forward—private members' bills and proposals that have come forward on this. As I say, I certainly have great sympathy for those who want to see something done about this. But the problem is that there's an old saying that for every complex problem, there's always one really, really attractive-sounding, simple solution that doesn't work. Unfortunately, some of the solutions that have been brought forward in this Legislature really do fit that bill. They're great for a bumper sticker, but they don't work in reality.

The fact of the matter is that if we simply go forward and say that all salaries in the broader public service are capped at X or Y, it doesn't work. The reason is that throughout the broader public sector we have a variety of positions and roles to which very, very specific expertise is needed. And I think we all recognize that when you want to go out and get the best people—I don't think there's anyone in the Legislature who doesn't want to see the best people running various aspects of the public service. If you want to get them, you have to often pay what is—call it a good market rate in order to get someone with that technical expertise and experience going forward. I'm not saying there aren't many, many cases when I think we could level off what's happening in the broader public sector, but to just go forward with a ham-fisted, "We're going cut it off at X or Y," is simply not going to work.

At the same time, we don't have all the information as to how people are paid in the broader public sector, not just simply their salary—obviously we have the sunshine list where we see it, or other public documents—but are there issues around severance, are there issues around housing allowance, are there issues around certain expenses that they've received? What this bill does—it's very comprehensive—is it gives us the authority to go out and collect all this information.

More importantly, it also gives us the authority to take a look at other jurisdictions and at different comparators, and come up with hard caps of what would be reasonable to pay different senior executives in different parts of the broader public sector. Then, again, this bill would give us the authority to impose them. It would also give us the authority to make sure they are enforced through certain mechanisms that hold the board accountable.

I think this is very, very important, because what I've just said does not fit nicely on a bumper sticker, but what it's going to do is come up with something that's reasonable and that's going to allow us to hire people with the technical knowledge, expertise and experience in order to undertake a role. At the same time, it's going to stop what, quite frankly, in some instances have been the outrageous packages that all of us read about in the paper every day.

0920

Another area that I'd like to talk about today is the proposed reforms on record-keeping, obviously a very

topical issue here in the Legislature. I'm certainly not going to run away from it. We have had a lot of very disturbing happenings over the last year or so. Last June, I believe it was, we saw the Information and Privacy Commissioner come out with a series of reports. As Minister of Government Services, I was very much involved in discussions with her and talks between our staffs about how we can improve the record-keeping regime here in the government.

I want to give full, full credit to the Premier, who took this situation very, very seriously, who worked with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

As Minister of Government Services, I was asked by the Premier to also work very closely with her to do two things.

The first was to adopt all the non-legislative recommendations that she had suggested, which include staff training and a whole framework to make sure that records are properly maintained here in government.

The second was to take a look at a number of legislative changes that the Information and Privacy Commissioner had put forward. Of these legislative changes, three of the principal ones she put forward are contained in this bill.

The legislation—I'll just review it for members—would, if passed, act on three of the commissioner's recommendations on the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It would require all institutions subject to FIPPA and MFIPPA, as those two acts are called, to ensure that measures are in place to preserve records; to prohibit the wilful destruction of records with the intent to deny someone access to records; and to introduce a fine of up to \$5,000 for the wilful destruction of records.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, our government consulted with the commissioner and her office about her recommendations to assist us in the development of this legislation. We wanted to make sure that we reached a consensus between the two of us on what we would put forward.

I'm going to be very transparent here with the House: We are not proposing an amendment with respect to the commissioner's fourth recommendation. I want to be clear, and certainly I've been very open in my discussions with her. That recommendation was to legislatively require the duty to document all key decisions within government.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, there is no legislative duty to document, in either freedom-of-information or record-keeping legislation, in any other jurisdiction in Canada. Although I think we all understand the spirit behind the duty to document, I think we can also ask ourselves: What exactly does that mean?

Obviously, we keep cabinet records and treasury board records, and decision notes are kept. We keep many of the steps leading up to it. But at what point does the duty step in? At what point is something merely informal? I've spoken with the IPC, and I think she understands

that these are questions that probably need more exploration.

What we have committed to do is to work through the various federal-provincial bodies that meet to discuss this, to work with other jurisdictions across Canada to explore this—as I say, I think everyone understands and accepts the spirit of it—to move forward. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, to give you more of the technical details, my ministry will be working with the information management subcommittee of the federal, provincial and territorial CIOs to determine the best path forward.

Regardless of how we proceed on this front, our recent and ongoing training on records management for staff continues to emphasize the need to manage and create public records in order to document key government decisions, activities and operations, and I want to stress that, Mr. Speaker. The fact that this fourth recommendation is not part of the legislation does not mean that we don't take it seriously.

All major policy decisions are always documented through meeting minutes, briefing notes, House notes, management board and treasury board notes as well as cabinet minutes.

I highlighted in some detail a number of the key parts of the bill. I do want to allow time for my colleague from Ottawa South to speak, who, as I say, has a particular passion for this area, but there's one final area that I want to touch on—and this bill is vast, so I've really just given you some of the highlights—and that's the role of the Ombudsman.

I think all of us recognize the important role played by not only the provincial Ombudsman, but other individuals who act either in that role, have that title or serve that purpose—that third party that the public can go to when they feel that the obstacles they've encountered really can't be moved aside, that they need to work their way through the red tape and find answers. We all know our provincial Ombudsman has been tireless in working through a variety of issues for citizens. He gets thousands and thousands of complaints a year that he deals with. He also looks at systemic issues within certain sectors and comes forward with special reports.

The Ombudsman in the province of Ontario has very broad authority over many of the activities of the government, but when it comes to the broader public sector, the Ombudsman's role has been limited. There have been a number of individuals in this Legislature who have certainly called for his oversight in a number of areas. I think, of course, of children's aid societies as one that there's been discussion on here, going on 11 years. I've seen private members' bills and questions in the Legislature, and that's just one example.

What we did is we first of all worked with the Ombudsman—I want to put that on the record—and came up with a package that would extend his powers, and then more general Ombudsman powers throughout what we affectionately call the MUSH sector. The first step is that the provincial Ombudsman will now have authority over municipalities, over universities and over school boards.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to put on the record—because I think there's been a little bit of confusion about this oversight. In many of these cases, we already have existing ombuds, as they are called. In the university system, many universities have an ombudsman and in the municipal system, there has been some media about the city of Toronto ombudsman. This is in no way trying to undermine their authority. The fact of the matter is, as I said at the outset, there are many, many people who deal with problems and disputes within the system who do an outstanding job. When I spoke with the provincial Ombudsman, he made it clear that his philosophy—in fact, some of this reflected in the legislation—is that when you have a problem, you go through the dispute mechanism. You work your way up the line, so to speak. You go to the tribunal or the special office or, in the case of some of these other institutions, the front-line ombudsperson, you present them with your situation and you work with them to solve it.

But at the same time, having this provincial Ombudsman have an umbrella role over them does two things. First of all, in those rare cases where someone really feels that the system is working against them and wants a fresh pair of eyes, then we have the provincial Ombudsman there to help with it. The second thing, and I think this is important to note, is that in many cases, what the provincial Ombudsman is doing is taking a look across the line. Yes, there may be something that's very specific to one municipality but, in other cases, there may be problems of a similar nature, to use the municipal sector as an example, that are popping up in a variety of municipalities. What he would want to do is to investigate and put forward a report on some of the systemic problems that are happening and, in that way, provide a different sort of look than an individual ombudsman could do.

Again, to just comment on some of the media reports, this is in no way meant as a criticism of the fine, fine work that is done by a number of people in the system who serve the role of ombudsman. I think of the universities and I also think specifically of the city of Toronto, where they have an outstanding individual who is doing a great job. She is seen as a real leader in this field. She will be allowed to do her work. This is, just as I say, providing another pair of eyes in those rare instances, and also his ability to look at some systemic issues.

So that's expanding the provincial Ombudsman's role, but in two other areas, Mr. Speaker—and I'll wrap up in a second on this note—we saw a need for a more specialized Ombudsman's role. That was the whole area of children's services—particularly, of course, children's aid societies.

0930

What this legislation would do is take an officer of Parliament, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and give him the same power and authority as an ombudsman. Again, we put together the framework in consultation with the provincial Ombudsman to make sure that the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth had a similar role to that played by Mr. Marin.

Also, in the whole area of health care, we have a patient Ombudsman who will provide a similar role. The understanding is that in both of those areas—they're very broad, they're very specialized. By creating or giving these new powers to these individuals, they can specialize in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, that is only a quick look at a very, very detailed bill. For those of you who have had a chance to go through it, you're going to find that there are a number of other initiatives that we could highlight and I'm sure will be highlighted during the course of debate. Together, it is a very, very comprehensive package.

I'll just end where I began: This is about open government, and open government is about engaging citizens, giving citizens a sense of ownership of their government and giving citizens a sense of responsibility towards working to solve many of the problems and challenges that we face. But in order to do that, we have to make sure that they have the information, that they have access to the data and analysis that we have, but also, there has to be a level of trust. There has to be a level of accountability, openness and transparency, and that's what this bill is about. I cannot state enough that this is one of the most comprehensive packages that has ever been brought to this Legislature in terms of accountability. I think, in general, it's a very, very comprehensive bill, and it outlines a lot of good work where a number of ministries came together.

I think this is a very, very important step. I look forward to the debate and discussion. Quite frankly, I look forward to support from all sides of this House, because I think it's in all of our interests to continue to build trust and confidence with the people of Ontario. This bill goes a long way towards that.

As I said at the outset, I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South. I know he, too, will want to speak upon the themes of this bill, but also its breadth. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much and yield the floor to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of the Legislature be permitted to wear pins in honour and remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, as today is Vimy Ridge Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga has asked for permission to wear the Vimy Ridge pin. Agreed? Agreed.

The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak in the leadoff to the debate on Bill 179, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. I'd like to thank the Minister of Government Services for sharing his time with me.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank my colleagues and friends here at Queen's Park for their kind words and thoughts on the passing of my father, who

died on Sunday. Over the last week and a half, I've had an opportunity to spend some time caring for him and being with him, and that would not have been possible without the support I've received from all of you. I thank you.

As a young man, the first and most important lesson my father taught me was about the keeping of a confidence. If someone shared something with you in confidence, you kept it to yourself, not to be shared with anyone else. He said it was important because keeping a confidence was all about trust, and trust is the key to working together and moving forward.

Trust is an essential ingredient needed for success in any endeavour. Transparency, openness and accountability are also all about trust. Bill 179 is about trust. It's about building trust in this Legislature, its members and how we conduct our business. It's about trust in government and the broader public service, and how they use the resources we are giving them. It's about building trust in our schools and universities as they serve our young people. It's about building trust in our hospitals, long-term-care homes and home care as they care for our loved ones. It's about building trust in our child protection system as it strives to watch over children and youth at risk.

Building trust is essential to our work. That's why I felt strongly when I introduced Bill 108, the Transparency in Members' Expenses Act, and that it was the right thing to do. If we wanted to build trust, we needed to do our work, we needed to take the first step and we needed to lead by example to build trust.

I'm very pleased that the measures in Bill 108 have been included in the act; it is the first of many steps in this bill. Bill 179 is broad and far-reaching. It expands the mandate of the Ombudsman to include municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities; it creates a new patient Ombudsman for hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access centres; it strengthens the mandate of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth to better serve those involved in the child protection system; it broadens expense disclosure from 17 agencies to include all 197 agencies in the broader public service; it requires that leaders of the opposition parties and their staff be subject to the same rules as the Premier, cabinet ministers and their staff; it authorizes the government to establish a framework for executive compensation in the broader public sector; and it makes mandatory for broader public sector organizations to publish their business plans and other relevant financial documentation.

The Minister of Government Services has worked closely with the officers of this Legislature to put this bill together, and the Premier has committed to leading the most open and transparent government in the country. Bill 179 will do that.

I know that the member from Trinity-Spadina has been pushing for Ombudsman oversight over universities and school boards for some time. I know that the member from Timmins-James Bay has said that he is generally in

favour of these measures and that he is willing to sit down and take a look at it. I also know that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was one of the first to disclose his expenses online. So I know that building trust and openness and transparency is important to all of us here in the Legislature.

I also know that our Ombudsman, André Marin, has said, "I look forward to seeing this bill come forward to the Legislature. It is a strong step toward a more democratic, accountable and open Ontario."

Bill 179 is legislation that all members of this Legislature can support. As we debate, it is important to remember that this bill is all about building trust as we go forward. Often in debate, there is a temptation to slip into finger-pointing and maybe some recrimination, and what I would urge all members to do is to remember that this is something that's about building trust in the future, not just for tomorrow or today as we debate but five, 10 and 20 years from now. That's something that all Ontarians deserve, and I believe that we need to come together and make this legislation work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: To the member for Ottawa South, we offer our sincere condolences on the passing of your father.

I think that, certainly, this is an important piece of legislation. We've been seeking accountability on this side of the House for some time, particularly in this minority government. With respect to things that happen in government, it's our job as the opposition to raise these issues. I think this legislation does some good things; it does make us a little bit more proactive in disclosing information that the public may want from time to time.

We've had conversations in this House, particularly on the member from Ottawa South's bill, with respect to the disclosure of MPP expenses. I'm certainly happy to disclose to the public what my expenses are, and I'm pretty sure that members of the Legislature will agree that some proactive measures are necessary.

What I do disagree with is that by coming in with an accountability act, I fear that the government is attempting to whitewash its sorry record on accountability, particularly with relation to what has happened and transpired with the gas plant scandal in this province, where it took the opposition—collectively, as an opposition; both the PCs and the NDP—working together to actually get some answers for the people of Ontario. It shouldn't be that hard to get answers for the people of Ontario. It shouldn't take a potential contempt of this Legislature to get answers for the people of the province of Ontario.

0940

We're very concerned, obviously, that this government thinks that by enacting this legislation, it wipes clean its sorry history on accountability and transparency. We will do our due diligence, Mr. Speaker, and debate this piece of legislation. I look forward to listening to the debate this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy, as always, to be able to stand in this House and speak about accountability because it's definitely something that needs a fix. This bill is something that we as New Democrats, as you know, are happy to see: the MUSH sector getting some oversight. It's something that we've been calling for, for many years. We're definitely happy to see that in this bill.

There are a lot of half measures that are happening. We're concerned that there's a patient advocate, instead of the Ombudsman, having oversight of the hospitals. I'm concerned that the Ombudsman is not getting any oversight over the children's aid societies. But I'm also confident in the work of our child advocate. I just hope that he's given enough tools to actually do the job that needs to be done.

There's a lot in this bill. How many schedules do we have? We have nine schedules in one bill. That's a lot to absorb within one piece of legislation. And there are gaps throughout it. So I know that we'll be looking forward to making some changes to this, to make sure that there is real accountability.

Schedule 1 establishes the authority to establish executive compensation frameworks. Well, that's really great, because on this side of the House, New Democrats have been calling for the capping of CEO salaries, but under this schedule I'm not really sure. They're talking about putting in frameworks of compensation of public sector executives, but there are no real caps attached to this. So it could be a very long process before we get to anything that would seem suitable for the people of this province.

I'm happy to have had this moment. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks of my colleagues the Minister of Government Services and the member for Ottawa South. Certainly, we all want to extend our condolences to the member for Ottawa South on the loss of his father.

I thought perhaps I would comment briefly on the things in the bill that will have an impact on the education sector. The first of those would be the controlling of senior executive compensation in the broader public sector, because that will apply to school boards. Our government, if this legislation is passed, would be establishing compensation frameworks, and that would include hard caps for executives in the broader public sector, including school boards. Heads of organizations would be required to submit attestations concerning compliance with the compensation frameworks, and employers would actually be required to repay any amount in excess of those caps as a debt to the crown. So there actually are not only hard caps, but penalties contemplated if those aren't followed.

There is a requirement to publish business plans and other financial documents. Quite frankly, I think school boards, given their current accountability requirements, already publish their financial statements. The budget process is public; annual reports are public. So I think

they will already be meeting the requirements in that respect.

Certainly, the one change for school boards will be the expansion of the Ombudsman's role to have oversight over school boards. That's something that we look forward to working with our school boards and the Ombudsman on, to figure out exactly how that would work in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comment?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was pleased to be here this morning to listen to the leadoff speech by the Minister of Government Services, and more recently by the member for Ottawa South. I too extend my sympathies and pay respect for the mourning of the loss of his father, and the fact that he was here today to speak.

I will switch now to a different tone. This is comprehensive legislation, as the House leader said. It's well overdue and needed at this time, with all the inquiries and the OPP walking around here, investigating everything that moves.

The theme that was mentioned by the member from Ottawa South really struck a note with me this morning. He used the word "trust." Unfortunately, I'm not going to have a full hour this morning. In this House, trust is the most important sentiment that could ever be felt, expressed or shown. There's an old axiom that says if you want to know if something is true, go and observe it. The observers in this House would say that they've broken trust.

I'm not trying to cast aspersions, in the positive mood that we're in this morning. I know that your remarks were quite sincere. Your private member's bill—I think it was Bill 108—to build in accountability is reflected in some of this bill, but I put it to you that after 10-plus years, it's too little, too late.

It's in that tone that I think our leader, Tim Hudak, has been pressing to bring some debate here in the House of having respect for the House itself in terms of accountability, I suspect you'd call it. They use that term "openness and transparency and accountability." They throw it around like Frisbees around here, so I'm quite cynical, in fact, of the sentiments being expressed.

I will have more to say this afternoon or sometime later. I look forward to the former mayor of Etobicoke's remarks today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa South has two minutes.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member from Cambridge, the member from Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Education and the member from Durham for their remarks.

I would like to address the member from Cambridge's remarks, just to say that this is about going forward. This is about what we're doing. What we do in this House is try to look out 10, 15, 20 years in the future. That's what this bill is about. It's not what's behind us. We'll continue to discuss what's behind us, but let's not lose focus on what this bill is about.

In response to the member from Hamilton Mountain, I thank her for her remarks and her general words of support. I would not describe the measures in the bill as half measures. Those measures were worked out with the current Ombudsman. He has expressed support on a number of occasions, initially describing the bill as historic and 35 years in the making. The measures that are outlined in this bill in terms of hospitals, long-term-care facilities and community care access centres will work. The measures outlined that increase the mandate for the child advocate will work, and I would encourage her to look at the legislation and support those measures.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for her remarks.

I agree with the member from Durham that trust is essential: trust in this House, trust in each other. We need to continue to build that trust. That was the point of my remarks. I hope he took them in that spirit. We're all colleagues here. We're all here because we want to make things better, because we want to take care of those things that are important to the families that we serve. To do that, we need to build trust.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Durham.

Before I commence, I would like to pass my condolences on to the member from Ottawa South, on your recent loss.

I rise in this chamber today, as the accountability critic for the PC opposition party, to speak on the merits but lack of clarity of the proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014, known as Bill 179. I should point out that I have serious reservations about the creation of new bureaucratic formations overseeing existing bureaucratic formations.

0950

The omnibus piece of legislation is a far-reaching proposal that, if enacted in full, would expand considerably the scope and impact of controlled supervision of spending by public sector agencies and elected officials. The bill, introduced on March 24 by the Minister of Government Services, expands the mandates of previously established oversight institutions—that's the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commissioner—and creates new advocacy structures, plus it requires you, Mr. Speaker, to publish the total expenses of all provincial members. I'm not sure if this covers expenses related to the Premier's office and those of ministers. Besides strengthening advocacy, reach and penetration, it adds broader enforcement rules for lobbying groups while adding greater investigative powers under the children and youth act, 2007, to provide greater ability for stronger advocacy of protective measures.

As Bill 179 moves forward to the day it receives royal assent, our party will discuss in detail the intent of this legislation that affects the responsibilities and powers of no fewer than 10 separate initiatives, requiring a plethora of centralized oversight operations. But while doing so,

we reserve the right, as opposition members, to seek clarifications and offer such amendments as we deem necessary to foster the goals of accountability, oversight and transparency without creating a paradigm shift in how this is to be achieved.

If this bill is passed in its totality, it will create a huge power grab that could stifle and hinder and even control the broad-based work of any or all of the ministries that have regulatory powers on the drumbeat of the lives of our total provincial population.

The Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Attorney General, Community and Social Services, Health and Long-Term Care, Finance, and Children and Youth Services are those ministries that will be affected. I can even see the involvement of an upper chamber or meeting place where these unelected and quasi-government officials with extraordinary powers meet to exercise their control over the regulatory affairs of the province.

Prior to moving on with this exercise, I would like to make a number of personal observations about the form and the tone of the minister's recent address in this House.

It appears that the government is attempting to capture the moral high ground to portray themselves as the party dedicated to rectify all social governing imperfections at all levels, and to ingratiate themselves in the eyes of the electorate as the moral saviours of the democratic system of government in Ontario. It seems to me that the speech must have been written by a crusader or witch-doctor wordsmith hell-bent on curing this government of its recidivist behaviour of the past decade.

You can't create moral authority through legislation. The righteous baffle-gab and sanctimonious tones of the recently converted from irresponsible spending to that of watchdog of the public treasuries and defender of oppressed Ontarians trapped under bondage to the irresponsible debt-producing actions of the McGuinty-Wynne years do not ring true. The only thing missing from the minister's performance were the words of Onward, Christian Soldiers, accompanied by the Salvation Army band.

I believe that you shouldn't strive to monitor and alter the affairs of governing at all levels by producing another layer of the machinery of government.

Our party fully understands the requirement for greater oversight of the procedures that administer delivery of services and the expenditures related to these activities. We are concerned that Bill 179 inadvertently brings on duplicative measures with ensuing costs. There really needs to be more creative investigation on the specifics of adding staff for new bureaucratic creations that will instill a Big-Brother-knows-best mentality in the art of governing.

It would be worthy of note if some background material could be provided on the administrative costs—office, legal, communications, staffing—required to research and fund the appropriate talents to be recruited to perform the duties called for by the existing and now new government bodies and public sector entities.

Later in this address, I am going to review the effects of these proposals on the 10 acts impacted by the omnibus act that creates a central authority, provided in the minister's notes provided to the NDP and ourselves.

But we should stop at this juncture to analyze just where Bill 179 will take us. In reality, the bill calls for new bureaucratic formations to oversee existing bureaucratic formations. At what cost to the taxpayers? We don't know.

Creation of a patient Ombudsman by amendments to the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, formulates duplication in client services. Duplication costs money. There are no costs to these changes offered on an act-to-act basis to supplement complaint regulations already in place. It is now the plan to have an Ombudsman who reviews the ombudsman's offices of municipalities, corporations, school boards and universities. This will even include the responsibilities of the local dog catcher. All these creations act to collectively constitute entities with costs and staffing that will overlap existing agencies and drive up the cost of governing to the taxpayer. Many of these proposals speak to the rampant inability of our existing bodies to administer the basic functions of accountability under this government.

It is interesting to note that the previous NDP and PC administrations were able to provide stable and efficient oversight, only to have all that unravel under the McGuinty-Wynne administration. Overall, despite the need and value of the proposed major accountability measures, this legislation is, in a negative sense, a resounding condemnation of past Liberal ineptitudes. The solutions recommended are a recognition of the failure of the current legislative acts to come to grips with accountability in major functions of public administration by this government. The Liberal initiatives in this regard are long overdue, much like closing the farm gate after the cattle have wandered off. There can be no more obvious egregious malfunction and abrogation of responsibility than the cancellation of the two gas plants, at a cost of \$1.1 billion, when it was announced that it would be some \$40 million. But I will return to that later.

I do not wish to be too harsh in my assessment here, but it appears to me that these ombudspeople—my word—will constitute a mythical race of administrators capable of presiding over provincial civil servants, countless municipal management employees, public sector managers, school boards, MPPs and everyone else—except the Speaker's office, the Premier's office and possibly the Human Rights Commission—in judgment of their performance. In real terms, this new swathe of enlightened ombudspeople will stand alone as protectors of both the public purse and the rights of taxpayers to receive that which is theirs that is now decreed through the awkwardly named Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014.

The range of change to present policies is comprehensive, as follows:

The Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014, will authorize Management Board of Cabinet

to order designated employers to provide compensation information. This is a major intrusion in the affairs of public corporations with a board and stakeholders to oversee them.

Amendments to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010, call for the preparation and publication of business plans by public sector organizations. Most of these organizations already operate under an annual business plan direction.

Amendments to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, and related amendments: Information on expenses is to be posted online within 90 days of notification by the Integrity Commissioner. Would this change current procedures, except for exposure of same?

Amendments to the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, create the office of a patient Ombudsman to handle complaints against long-term-care and community care access corporations. It might be needed, but it will place a huge burden on the CCACs to handle frivolous complaints.

Amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act amend the act to require the preservation of records and list offences that apply if not enforced. I'm not sure what this does. We need to find this out before we proceed.

Amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act require the Speaker to post information about payments to MPPs for travel expenses other than their electoral district costs—more paperwork for the Clerk and the Speaker.

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Amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, amend the act by adding new oversight and enforced powers. Lobbyists beware.

Amendments to the Ombudsman Act and Related Amendments amend the Ombudsman Act extend jurisdictional powers over municipalities, boards and universities. This is the most dangerous expansion of oversight of all.

Amendments to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, provide the act with new investigative powers to oversee children's aid societies and some residential licensees. We, of course, support this completely.

Amendments to the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009, allow the Integrity Commissioner to select public entities that will have the duty to provide copies of all expense claims. This will produce a game of Russian roulette for whoever falls under this descriptive enterprise.

Now we find that the main thrust of this legislation is to give birth to a new class of overseers which are described in part of my analysis as ombudspeople, a term that describes their function as monitors of just about all the government services in Ontario. These ombudspeople will be arbitrarily designated by the government to reign over all of us, and much like the persons who act as arbitrators in society today, they might not possess any specific academic qualifications except for their labelling

by this government as worthy and qualified to perform. It makes it sound like Ontario is a dystopian place, which is what the above description implies.

This list includes the Ontario Ombudsman, the patient Ombudsman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the provincial audit group, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. This creation of a ruling structure of Orwellian proportions with CIA-like powers that will be subject to no audit or supervision is a frightening prospect. We must be careful that the cure is not more dangerous than the disease.

Unfortunately, the need for this omnibus bill emerges from the ashes of the public skulduggery that has been perpetrated on the unsuspecting public by those ensclosed in the office of the former Premier of Ontario. This era of hard-drive recording of decisions made and their manipulative concealment and eventual destruction of this evidence by a Premier's staff is truly cause for alarm.

But what are we to do when the real decisions of government are not reached in an open forum? No omnibus bill can overcome this kind of behaviour. I don't wish to get too far off topic here, but these questions have to be asked. Has the role and purpose of elected government been so compromised by the ability of the digital-age technology to subvert parliamentary rules and government accountability that transparently rendered proceedings of a democratic government are now made irrelevant?

Another question arises: How can we assume that the Ontario Ombudsman, accountable to nobody in particular and given oversight powers for municipalities, corporations, commissions, school boards and universities, is competent to suitably handle these responsibilities? Where will it end? It gives power to anyone—citizen or not—that, if used exponentially, could severely impair government operations and decision-making. This reach would, in effect, make his office duties and powers greater than those of our existing ministers, who must abide by the time-tested rules of governing.

Finally, I would make one more observation. I believe that all the savings to be realized by the implementation of Bill 179 over a 10-year period won't add up to nearly as much as the \$1.1 billion spent to cancel two gas plants that didn't even produce one kilowatt of electricity. No matter how many layers of supervision are created, it won't stop a Premier and compliant cabinet from ignoring time-honoured rules of conduct.

With the costs and duplication of oversight in mind, it is our recommendation that the government committee receiving the bill for debate and discussions call for input from the existing bodies so affected by these measures to ascertain prescribed transparency as to procedures and at what acceptable costs to achieve the objectives outlined.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm a little bit disappointed that I'm up this morning, because I would have preferred to have the whole hour uninterrupted, but—

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't mean that humorously; I think this is a serious bill. I think the minister started this morning by saying that it's a comprehensive piece of legislation, and indeed it is. If you look at it, the bill itself—just for the public here to get a sense—is 75 pages in two official languages. I think there are 10 schedules in it, and there are amendments to a number of very important bills, the lobbyist register etc. I might go through those, just in the bill. It's important for the public to understand.

First of all—I want to be on the record—we support transparency and accountability. There's no question about that. However, at the same time, we are suspicious. It's a feel-good piece of legislation. We agree, but we don't believe a thing that they're saying.

Honest to God, their motives are questionable. Why are they doing this at this time now? They should have a bill in here about jobs and the economy. Look at the young people: There's no future for them. Kellogg's is leaving; Heinz is leaving; Caterpillar is leaving. We're still buying Kellogg's cereal; it's just not made in Ontario anymore. That's the troubling truth of what's going on.

We have the highest energy rates, the highest electricity rates in North America.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Wrong.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, you have two minutes. You can refute that. But my point—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the member from Durham to stick to the issue. He's drifting. Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can't imagine how I could start drifting. I've only been up for a minute or so. However, I was trying to put things into perspective. I take deference to the Speaker, and I'll be silenced to that extent.

This Bill 179, as I said before, is comprehensive. In fact, that's a very good place to start. The member from Ottawa South—I had a chance, thanks to the terrific staff here, to have a look at his bill, Bill 108. In this bill—this is a good part to start—I think it's got merit. If we could have a discussion on this, that would be something that we could digest in a sitting here.

But this bill here—I don't think it's ever been debated, but the explanatory note says that this report of members' expenses "must set out every payment made to a member in respect of a travel, accommodation or other expense. The reports must include the amount of each payment and an explanation of each expense. The Board of Internal Economy is required to post the report on the website"—it's already available; it's already done. It's called the member's expense. We file it every year. What that has in it is every trip, every cup of coffee, everything that you've done. It's posted and it's distributed to all of the media here once a year. It's an annual report.

I think we just recently got our report for last year, did we not?

Mr. Rob Leone: It's almost done.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it was just done.

I'm going to put this on the table. I think the House leader—I wish he was here, because this is the way I

would handle that. It has passed all the sniff tests by the bureaucrats, or the civil servants, to be fair. They've signed off on it and issued you a cheque. If they have questions, they will call you or return it with the expenses questionable and make you explain it or sign off on it, and that's posted.

If I have a website—there's no tinkering with it—then that should be posted. You just press on “member's expenses”: Boom, it shows up. It would be reporting, whether it's me or Ms. MacCharles, the Minister of Consumer Services—she's from Durham region.

Now, here's the issue: Ms. MacCharles is a minister. Well, I don't get to see all of hers.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, yes, you do, because they have to post them.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, they do, but here's the deal: Half the time they're travelling with the deputy or other staff, and they pick it up. There's where the beguiling begins, the twisting of the—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, I should put it this way: This is all within the context of Bill 179. Let's keep it in small, little digestible bites. I know for a fact that we cannot, should not and, I agree, will never charge alcohol. We are representing the public. We shouldn't even be consuming it, actually. Moderation, I suppose, in all things. I'm not a teetotaler or anything like that—close to it, perhaps.

But here's the issue: That stuff often shows up because we can't get a hold of the staff's, the civil servants', side of it. Even travelling, in fairness—I've had the privilege in my 19 years here of travelling on a committee. Well, wait a minute. That is luxury. I'm not trying to cut off our own entitlements here—

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're thinking of the federal government.

1010

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm not thinking of the—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The MPs.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, no. I don't want to be distracted by the Minister of Environment.

When they travel at committee, quite often it's picked up by the Clerk of the committee—bingo. How about the Speaker of the Legislature? I've been to soirees there that are worth questioning. Let's not tear ourselves down. As long as we keep it in perspective: We're representing the people of Ontario. If we could keep the partisan stuff out of it, most of the time we could move along here, but everybody wants to get the winning shot, which brings me back to Bill 179.

It's like the old much-said-about-nothing, or nothing-said-about-something. In this case here, there's a lot in this bill. There really is. It's comprehensive. It's 75 pages or so. As I said before, the member from Ottawa South as well as the minister used these very powerful, suggestive, visualized words; these words were “openness,” “accountability,” “transparency”—empathetic language, body style, all this stuff. To me, it's smoke and mirrors. The

truth will always be found out. I think everything we do here should be printed and published. It is.

Here's the issue, Mr. Speaker—you know this as well; you raised an issue yesterday at a committee. You were trying to have more openness and accountability. You asked for some access to security reports on the Pan Am Games, I believe it was. What happened? The government side voted him down. What's wrong with it?

Now, if you look at some of the investigations going on—I don't want to get into the legal matters. In all fairness, the Premier flips the question to the House leader. “Oh, it's before the courts,” or, “It's being investigated. I don't want to interfere.” But it makes you harder. When we asked for more information on the Ornge thing, what they did is they opened up Niagara Falls and flooded the paper out—thousands, millions of documents, all redacted. You can't find the answers. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. Openness and transparency is in question period when you're asked, “Did you or did you not agree with the closing of the gas plants?”

Hon. James J. Bradley: And Tim did. He campaigned for it.

Mr. John O'Toole: See, the Minister of the Environment keeps trying to get me off message, which often happens.

Here's the issue, though—the whole issue there is exactly that. They do not ever answer the question. It's tragic. There are FOIs; they're delayed; they're denied. It's proprietary information. All of those rules have to be looked at and reviewed.

At the same time, if you're government, you have reasons to be working in confidence when you're building relationships and trust with stakeholder groups or with, for instance, investors in things like the Presto card. There was a bid on that. That's the card they use—I don't have mine with me, but I have one—for transit. They had a bid on it, and I think it was quite expensive—maybe \$100 million. I think it cost \$500 million. Now why do we have to go looking into that? Why aren't they warning us? Why isn't the auditor stepping in on an ongoing basis, saying, “These are things that should be watched?”

I would expect that pretty soon, the way the Speaker's looking at me, I'm going to be terminated here—well, not terminated, but asked to yield the floor. But I won't. I want to speak to the people of Ontario and certainly the people of my riding of Durham.

I've been to pretty well every province and every Legislature—the territories as well. I've been to Westminster a few times. I'd say that there's this idea of the government having secrets or the government having it hard to get to the bottom of things.

This bill, I think, has a lot in it that—I don't think we need the Ombudsman snooping around at every single thing. But when he or she is asked to look at it, they certainly should have every access without any barriers or conditional blockades, and trust the person in that position. We use the word “trust” here. The officers at the Legislature, whether it's the commissioner of the environment, the Integrity Commissioner, or in this case,

the Ombudsman—Mr. Marin is wont to have his picture in the paper the odd time. I would say that he's—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Nineteen times in his report.

Mr. John O'Toole: There you go, the Minister of the Environment. I wish he'd call my mayor in Clarington and have a discussion with him, because he's concerned about things that I'm trying to be heard on. It turns out that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Durham, but it being 10:15, he will continue where he left off at a future date.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests: the member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Actually, on a point of order, Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of the Legislature be permitted to wear pins in honour and remembrance of the battle of Vimy Ridge, as today is Vimy Ridge Day. They're laid upon each member's desk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for Vimy Ridge Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. Also on a point of order, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear the daffodil pins today in recognition of the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Consumer Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to welcome the Holy Trinity Catholic High School from Bradford, who will soon be joining us. I'd ask all members to help welcome them.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce my neighbour from the great township of Coleman, Ken Laffrenier, who just happens to be the father of our great page, Callista.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to introduce Christina Thomson, the senior executive assistant of the mayor of Kingston; my long-suffering chief of staff, Sabrina Grand; and the employee I've had the longest in my office, Mary Yoannidis. They're both here to observe this.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Henry Koskamp, from my riding of Perth—Wellington, who

helps to operate Koskamp Family Farms, and a friend of his from Stayner, Andy Van Niekerk. Welcome.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'd like to introduce to the House my newest staff member, sitting in the east lobby for his very first time in question period, Mr. Peter Rankin.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We're joined today by individuals from the Canadian Cancer Society. I'd like to specifically welcome Ray Ong, Saajid Motala and Andrew Noble, and thank them for all the wonderful work they do.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: These guests haven't arrived yet, but I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Bryan and Heather Smith, from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. They live in Lucan, Ontario.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome Ronnie Gavsie, president and CEO of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, and Carrie Dyson, communications adviser at the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The guests are not in the House, but I'm sure they'll be in soon. I want to welcome Anne Leonard, from Arrive Alive Drive Sober; Gwyn Chapman, from Parents 4 Safe Communities; Carol Fagan, from Fight Against Impaired Driving; and Matt Evans, of Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have another guest coming to Queen's Park today from Lucan, in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. I'd like to welcome Bill Smith to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: We are joined today in the public galleries by members of the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, including Peggy Allen, president, and Mary Cook, executive director. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I don't think they're here yet, but we are being visited today by Chris May and some of his colleagues from the Chartered Professional Accountants association. We want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: She's not here yet, but I want to inform the House that one of our legislative security officers, Maria Mangoni, has just returned from successfully running the marathon in Rome. She is one of 19,000 who ran it and one of very few who finished it. Congratulations, Maria.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That just proves that you cannot outrun security, so don't try.

We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, a parliamentary delegation from the Scottish Parliament: the Right Honourable Tricia Marwick, the Speaker of the Scottish Parliament; Ms. Linda Fabiani, member of Scottish Parliament; and Ms. Rhoda Grant, member of Scottish Parliament. Welcome to Ontario. Thank you for being here.

I'm told that the Speaker is going to grade me today, so I'm not sure whether or not I'm going to pass.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek consent to stand down the PC lead questions until the fifth PC rotation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We will stand down the rotation. I do not believe it is unanimous consent. It's basically just information for us.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do need consent? Sorry. All right. I've been schooled again. We do need consent. Do we agree? Agreed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. The reality was that I heard some heckling, and I wasn't sure if it was a yes.

Do we have agreement? Agreed.

The leader of the third party, on questions.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, David Nicholl, the bureaucrat responsible for government record-keeping, said that he knew the government's own security branch was investigating the possibility that Liberal staff had been illegally wiping computers.

When did the Premier learn that her own government was investigating deleted hard drives?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times in this House, I learned of the allegations against the former Premier's chief of staff on March 27 when those became public.

There is an investigation ongoing. I do not have the details of that investigation. I will not interfere with that investigation. I really believe that we need to let that investigation roll out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has now repeated again that she was as shocked as anyone when the allegation of breach of trust broke out on March 27. The Premier knew, however, that there were multiple investigations happening and knew they were affecting her offices. The Premier said she was as surprised as anyone, but what exactly did the Premier think the police were looking for?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I did; I learned of the allegations on March 27—that is absolutely true—like everyone else. The investigation is ongoing. I am not going to interfere with that investigation, nor do I have the details of that investigation, and that's as it should be.

What I did when I came into this office, as I have said to the member opposite: As I opened up the process, I made it clear that there were questions that had been asked that needed answers, and that there were documents that needed to be provided to committee. The scope of the committee was expanded. We have provided those hundreds of thousands of pages of documents. I

have appeared before the committee twice, and there have been dozens of people who have appeared before that committee and have answered the questions the committee has asked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm asking specifically about when the Premier knew that there were investigations going on in her offices. Of 22 staff who had their computers wiped, nine of those people are still Liberal staffers. Three of them are in the Premier's office. One works for her in agriculture and food. Two of them have been promoted to chief-of-staff roles.

The government has been seized with this scandal for over a year, but the Premier seems to be saying she was as surprised as anyone when the news broke on the 27th of March. Is the Premier saying that none of her staff ever told her about this?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, it was common knowledge that there was an investigation into questions about record-keeping. We had conversations with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The rules were changed as a result of conversations with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We knew that the privacy commissioner was looking into this last spring.

The OPP investigation was known about, last June. That was common knowledge. The allegations, the recent allegations, I first knew about on March 27, because I am not interfering in the investigation. It is ongoing; it was known that it was in place; and it will continue to roll out. I will continue not to interfere in that investigation.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, media reports indicated that the OPP are still hoping to talk to a number of individuals, including Dalton McGuinty, the man whose legacy the Premier is sworn to uphold. Does the Premier think that Dalton McGuinty should agree to be interviewed by the OPP anti-rackets group?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the investigation is ongoing. The investigation will include people as the individuals leading it choose. I have no control over that.

As the leader of the third party knows, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, has appeared twice before the committee. I have appeared twice before the committee. I have done everything in my power to make sure that, as questions have been asked, they have been answered, and I will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I was asking about the OPP investigation. You know, it's not just Dalton McGuinty; the report indicates that the OPP is hoping to talk to several key Liberals, including the former chief of staff and his deputies. At committee, the OPP indicated that some of those folks have declined to do so. Does the Premier think they should talk to police?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the leader of the third party knows full well that I do not have control over every person who might be asked to come before a committee.

I know that there have been people who have been asked to come before the committee who were former PC candidates, for example, and they have not shown up. I think individuals make their decisions.

My decision was to appear before the committee twice. We have done everything in our power to co-operate with the people who are asking questions and make sure that they get those answers. We have done that repeatedly; we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about the OPP anti-rackets squad request to speak to people. The Premier says this is an open and accountable government that respects the value of taxpayers' dollars, but all that people see are Liberals avoiding accountability and a Premier scrambling to distance herself from the legacy of Dalton McGuinty.

Can the Premier answer a very simple question? As leader of the Liberal Party, will she urge all fellow Liberals to co-operate fully with the OPP investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have been clear: This is an investigation over which I have no control. I am not interfering with the investigation. It is up to the OPP, who are directing the investigation, to continue to do that. I will continue to not interfere in that. As we are asked questions, as the committee does its business, we will continue to co-operate in every way.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. When the people of Ontario heard about these wiped computers in your office, they were furious. They knew it all along; they felt it in their bones. Now the OPP are hot on the trail.

If somebody dropped this in my lap without warning, I'd be apoplectic. I'd come out swinging. Your reaction? You're concerned. If you really didn't know anything, why weren't you furious with these people and demanding answers from them?

The only people you seem to be mad at are the PCs, the very people who are exposing your scandal. So instead of fighting to get to the truth, you're fighting to keep the truth from coming out. That's not what people expect from a Premier. They want someone who will fight for them, not someone who is fighting against them.

Premier, why are you fighting against the truth coming out?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to comment on the

latest details around the committee, but I just want to say this: I really believe that it is my responsibility as the Premier and the leader of this party, it is my responsibility as the leader of this government, to make sure that over-the-top rhetoric is not part of my *modus operandi*. What I have a responsibility to do is to make sure that as questions are asked, we answer them; if there is a process that needs to be changed, we change that process; if there are rules that need to be changed, then we change those rules. That's exactly what we've been doing.

My responsibility is to take action to make sure that, as we go forward, mistakes that were made are not made again, and we ensure that we have all of the information that is asked for made available. That's my responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, many in our caucus have spent a lot of time getting to the bottom of your gas plant scandal. We've all seen the systematic attempts to keep us from getting the truth out. You say you brought in the Auditor General, but that's only after the Liberals blocked us from doing it. You say you weren't involved in the Oakville scandal, yet we found your signature on the documents that kick-started this whole scheme. You say you weren't involved in Mississauga, but you co-chaired the campaign when it was cancelled.

Premier, those steady hands of yours have left a lot of fingerprints on the gas plant scandal. Does the committee have to call you in a third time to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I listened very, very carefully to the member from Nipissing's question, and he seemed to leave out the fact that his party made the exact same promise in the last election. He forgot to mention that his leader posted a video on YouTube saying that if he was elected Premier, the gas plant would be done, done, done. He forgot to mention the fact that when we asked Progressive Conservative candidates to come forward in the committee to talk about the policy analysis they had done, the costing they had done, to ask the same questions they're asking, they miraculously couldn't appear. Despite the fact that one even said she would appear, she surprisingly, at the last minute, said, "Oh, no, I can't."

Please, it's a little rich for them to be standing up to talk about getting to the bottom when the fact of the matter is that there are all these inconvenient facts that they leave—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, long before your date of March 27, when you

say you first found out about this, government services had a forensic investigation of the deleted emails and deleted hard drives in the Premier's office. On September 5, they had identified that 24 hard drives in the Premier's office had been deleted.

Did the Premier ever discuss with your Minister of Government Services that investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I would direct the honourable member, I would direct all honourable members, to the document that was made public through the court proceedings about two weeks ago. That clearly references the reporter investigation that he's talking about as part of the OPP investigation.

I can inform the honourable member that, as Minister of Government Services, I had a discussion with my deputy early on where I indicated to him that any interaction between my ministry and the OPP—I did not wish to know anything about it, to be briefed on it or to be in any way connected, because I wanted to make sure that it was fully independent.

I am pleased to say that the deputy and members of my ministry respected that. I was given no information about any work being undertaken by the Ministry of Government Services.

Again, let's let the OPP continue their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That is an unbelievable answer to the question. Nine of the 22 staff, Premier, whose computers were wiped are still Liberal staffers. Three of them still work in your office, and one who used to work in the Premier's office works daily with the government House leader.

My question to the government services minister: Did you raise—yes or no—this issue, before the date the Premier said, directly with her?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the New Democrats have been for the last year or so. I have an article here from June 7, 2013, which outlines the news that the OPP is conducting an investigation into this matter. That was a matter of public record, now going on close to a year.

As I just indicated, I felt the prudent course, as minister, was that I in no way be involved or have knowledge of the OPP investigation because, unlike members of the opposition, I respect the independence of the NDP—

Hon. James J. Bradley: OPP.

Hon. John Milloy: OPP. I correct my record, Mr. Speaker.

I also respect the independence of the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

As the OPP indicated, interference by politicians could, in fact, jeopardize the investigation.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as you know, today is the Inter-

national Day of Pink. The Day of Pink is an anti-bullying initiative which began in Nova Scotia after a grade 9 student was bullied in school for wearing pink. Two students who witnessed the incident bought pink shirts to fight against bullying and stand with the student.

Young people across Canada, including schools in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, are wearing pink today to draw attention to the harmful effects of bullying.

This demonstrates the importance of speaking up against all forms of discrimination and homophobia. It also demonstrates that, together, we can stop bullying and end discrimination, particularly in our schools.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please inform the House why it is so important that our schools are welcoming and safe places for Ontario students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her question.

It is so important that we all take a stand and say we will not accept bullying in our schools.

As chair of the Safe Schools Action Team and Minister of Education, I visited schools all across the province that are taking a stand against bullying. I think of one school in Guelph where I visited with the students in the gay-straight alliance, the GSA, at this school. They told me that one of the things they had done that had the greatest impact was that they arranged to meet with the staff in the staff cafeteria and had a very open conversation with the staff about things the staff could do differently in the school to create a better atmosphere for gay and lesbian students.

Another student told me that she wasn't gay, she wasn't a lesbian, but that the GSA had supported her in her bullying situation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Initiatives like the International Day of Pink show that our young people want to stand up to bullying. But we know that bullying doesn't just happen in our classrooms. It occurs on the Internet, on websites like Facebook and Twitter. We also know there have been tragic incidents of young people taking their lives because of the bullying they have received in the classroom and online.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she inform the House what our government is doing to combat bullying outside the classroom?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member is absolutely correct: Bullying often does occur outside the school, which is why, for the first time in Ontario, we have recognized cyberbullying in legislation and included cyberbullying as part of the definition of bullying.

We've also given principals the authority to take action when there is bullying that takes place online that has a negative impact on the school.

I think of one school that I visited here in Toronto that took action beyond just looking at student cyberbullying. They actually set up an email line where kids could report bullying online. The vice-principal monitored that, and the school was able to set up workshops for the kids

about homophobia, racism and ethnic discrimination and deal with all sorts of facets as a whole school community and reduce bullying.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, since you were appointed by the Liberal Party a year ago, you've talked a lot about running an open government and wanting to engage in a lot of conversations. This makes your recent behaviour hard to explain. A few weeks ago, your House leader accused my colleague the member from Nipissing of divulging confidential documents to the public. That was quickly exposed as nothing but a ploy to cover up your own incompetence and distract attention from your scandals.

Premier, you're at it again. Your attempts at intimidation against our leader, Tim Hudak, and the member from Nepean—Carleton are unwarranted and undemocratic. It is our job as the official opposition to question and hold your scandal-plagued government to account. Will you drop this charade today and get on with the task of providing Ontarians some hope? If you won't, we'll be glad to do it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Before I go to the Premier, I'm going to offer advice to all members that we should not be tiptoeing around unparliamentary language to the best of our ability. If it gets there, I'll let you know.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We all recognize the fact that this is a time for debate, this is a time for discussion, but at the same time, all of us inside the House and outside the House have to stick to the facts. I've shared quotes before. I have a new one from the Ottawa Citizen. I believe it's today, April 9: "The Tories seem to have no real theory of what happened. The idea may be to fling as much muck as possible and hope Ontarians blame Kathleen Wynne for something."

The fact is, we need to be dealing with facts, and I am pleased and I am proud that the Premier has consulted her lawyers in this. As I've noted a number of times, the member from Nepean—Carleton is familiar with this situation. It was not that long ago that she, as a result of a lawsuit, had to retract something that she had written. That's all we ask: Deal with the facts and apologize and withdraw those things that are not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Premier, through the information to obtain and the justice committee, we've learned a lot about how your party made the decision to cancel the gas plants and the efforts made by Liberal operatives to systematically destroy the evidence. We have reason to believe that the wrongdoing occurred at the highest level of your McGuinty-Wynne government. There's much to be uncovered, and despite your efforts, we're going to keep asking the questions that you don't want answers to.

Premier, is it not true that the reason you initiated this frivolous action is because you know the OPP's investigation could still take some time, and you're afraid of other embarrassing revelations coming out prior to a potential spring election? I'll ask you again: Will you drop this today and let us get on with the jobs we've all been sent here to do?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, we're asking people to deal with the facts. I know everyone in the House likes when I do this. Let's tell you that the reviews are in. Let's share some of them. Toronto Star, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show." Toronto Star, again, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's premiership." Ottawa Citizen, April 1: The PCs "asked repeatedly whether Wynne's computer was among those wiped, which makes little sense: the police are crystal clear that they're interested in computers in McGuinty's office, where Wynne did not work." Globe and Mail editorial, April 1: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader ... is on thin legal ice." The Globe and Mail editorial goes on to say that the Leader of the Opposition's "claim that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers, when there is no evidence to support such an allegation, goes too far."

Let's deal with the facts, and if they're not, they're going to hear from the Premier's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The CEO of Bruce Power is front and centre in today's newspapers, calling on the government to sell off more of our electricity system to private operators—specifically him. Is that the government's plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Many of us here in this chamber know Duncan Hawthorne quite well. He has a very distinctive way of communicating. However, he also is an entrepreneur, and he's going to do whatever he can to generate benefits for his shareholders.

The government is not currently looking at the disposing of any of our energy companies. Our updated long-term energy plan sets out the refurbishment schedule for Bruce's units and for OPG's units. Mr. Speaker, there's an unbelievable level of co-operation now between OPG and Bruce Power on how they can generate efficiencies in moving forward with that significant project.

1100

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Families who are stuck paying the highest hydro bills in Canada get a little anxious when they hear "Liberal" and "private power deal" in the same sentence.

It has been clear for some time that the folks at Bruce Power and TransCanada—TransCanada, who did very well out of the gas plant scandal, by the way—are hoping

to create a private monopoly in nuclear power. Will the minister take that idea off the table?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work to generate efficiencies in the electricity system, whether we're partnering with the private sector or other public entities.

He raises the question of electricity prices. As I said on other days in this Legislature, when you look at the comparative numbers from a third party independent—Quebec Hydro—the price in Ottawa is 12.39 cents per kilowatt hour; Toronto, 12.48 cents; Edmonton, 13.9 cents; Calgary, 14.8 cents; Halifax, 15.45 cents. If you want to look at the US comparison, which the other party looks at frequently, Detroit is 15.54 cents, Boston, 16.50 cents, New York, 21.75 cents. We are competitive, and we're not going to listen to your BS.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's no point of order. Just stop.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, and good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As our government transforms Ontario's transportation network, it is crucial that we ensure that we bring new economic opportunities to each and every part of this province. This is important to me, as I represent a rural community, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

On Friday, the minister made an announcement in North Bay on the future of the ONTC. Yesterday, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane asked the minister to clarify our plan forward on the ONTC. However, Speaker, I believe the member appeared to need some clarification on some of the major facts regarding the ONTC.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government delivering transit solutions and providing certainty for communities in northeastern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for the question and an opportunity to clarify some important facts that were maybe set out incorrectly yesterday.

I do think it's fair to say that all members recognize that there have been tremendous changes in the telecommunications industry. From our perspective, and I think it would probably be shared by many, it doesn't make a great deal of sense for a government to continue to run a telecommunications company that's in direct competition with the private sector. So indeed we have reached a purchase agreement with Bell Aliant to purchase Ontera. To inform the member opposite on an important point:

Ontera has been losing money over the past decade, in terms of their costs exceeding their revenues. This particular purchase agreement with Bell Aliant will give the province value within three years. Bell is better positioned to attract industry partners and invest in capital. We're going to continue to make sure services are provided to communities in Iroquois Falls, Temagami, Marten River, Tilden Lake, Moosonee and Moose Factory and all—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that clarification. It's obvious that the minister has taken the needed action to find a sustainable solution for the ONTC while providing certainty for northeastern Ontario residents.

The minister mentioned funding to the ONTC for core transportation services for northeastern Ontario. We all know that providing investments in transportation services and infrastructure assists economic growth and benefits many sectors.

Speaker, can the minister tell us of the new strategic investments that are being made to improve the ONTC's transportation service and infrastructure and the economic benefits that we can expect?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There's no question about it: There were some very necessary improvements to continue transformation of the ONTC. A sustainable and a bright future is very much possible for the ONTC.

The decisions that were made and the recommendations that came from the ministerial advisory committee in particular determined that focusing on core transportation services was absolutely crucial. We will continue to operate motor coaches—the bus service—the Polar Bear Express, freight rail and refurbishment services. They will be staying in public hands.

With a \$23.2-million investment added on to that over three years to improve service and the accessibility of motor coach services—we're purchasing 11 new buses—and to refurbish passenger coaches for the Polar Bear Express, we're making real improvements and providing a bright future. By reaching this decision, we are also providing much-needed certainty to the future of the ONTC. Transforming the ONTC is part of our plan to ensure a prosperous regional economy that attracts more people and more investment in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to bring some clarity to an issue. The member from Toronto-Danforth stood on a point of order. We do not traditionally and conventionally entertain points of order during question period, but we will entertain them after. There was a purpose and a reason for his point of order and it goes back to what I have been exercising, and that is to try to listen carefully to what people say in the House, and regrettably—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex not to intervene.

I do not always hear things that are said in the House because of the heckling and because of the volume of noise. If any member wishes to stand and withdraw or correct their record, I would ask all honourable members to do so, if anyone said anything that they should not have.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I withdraw the comment that I made, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question? This is, for clarity's sake, the lead question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: That's right.

My question is to the Minister of Health. The criminal investigations that are reaching into the offices of the Premier and ministers in this government will ultimately expose the pervasive corruption of this government. While the focus, to date, has been on the Premier's office and on ministers and on political staff, it appears now that civil servants have been co-opted into highly unethical conduct as well. That's precisely what's taking place in the Ministry of Health.

Can the minister tell us why Assistant Deputy Minister Patricia Li and the new head of the air ambulance oversight, Richard Jackson, would direct ministry staff to alter a letter to say that the Ministry of Health did not have a copy of the forensic investigation team's audit report on Ornge when they both knew that there were copies in the ministry at that time?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

As I did listen carefully, I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can say to the member opposite is that Ornge has been under a lot of scrutiny and, as the member knows, the committee has been meeting for a long time. We have legislation before the House, Bill 11, that would complete the work that needs to be done to bring the appropriate oversight to Ornge.

In terms of the specific question that the member has asked, I will undertake to look into that allegation. It is certainly not behaviour that I am aware of, nor would I condone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Apparently some emails survived this government's cleansing. Here is an email trail that was gleaned from a dump of emails to the public accounts committee just last week. In the first email, Charles Meehan of the Ministry of Health wrote the following: "The only edit is a sentence"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment, second time.

Mr. Frank Klees:—"added after discussions with Patricia Li." This is an email sent to the solicitor at the Attorney General responsible for the Ministry of Health. The edit, he says, "is intended to clarify that the Ministry of Health does not have a copy of the report and that no staff in the ministry have read or accessed the ... report."

Here was the response from Paul Kaufman, in the Ministry of the Attorney General. He said, "I don't know how we can say this—my understanding is that the ministry does have possession ... so the statement is not true."

Can the minister tell us: Why is her—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I will remind the member that when I say "Thank you," that's the end of your time for questioning, and when I stand up, you sit down. Stop, please.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It appears to me that the emails make it clear that they corrected when they found an error.

As I said, I will look into this issue. What I can tell you is that progress at Ornge is significant under the new leadership of Ian Delaney and the CEO, Dr. Andrew McCallum. We have seen a remarkable improvement in the quality of care. I think the member opposite would agree that, under the new leadership and the volunteer board at Ornge, we have seen significant improvements.

Ornge is into a new chapter. The right changes are being and have been made. I look forward to discussing that more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question? The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm not talking about Ornge; I'm talking about the Ministry of Health. I'm talking about the assistant deputy minister who has oversight responsibility for Ornge. She is the one who directed staff in her own ministry to falsify a statement regarding a matter taking place in the Ministry of Health. That is what happened.

I'd like to know this, because 11 months after that record was changed at the direction of the assistant deputy minister, the minister herself testified that there were no copies of that record because they had forwarded it directly to the OPP. I want to know from this minister: What can we rely on to be the truth that we've heard from her or any of her civil servants on this file?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

I correct my record. It was the final supplementary. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think those of us who are paying attention to what the member from Newmarket–

Aurora has done in the past would have confidence in knowing that he might not have the whole story. He has a remarkably consistent track record in bringing forward just part of the story.

What I can tell you is that Paul Kaufman is our ministry lawyer. He noticed that an error had been made and corrected that error. Thank you, Speaker.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Again, I'm going to direct this to the Premier. I'd like to know from the Premier if she sees a contradiction here, because we certainly do. On the one hand, the Premier professes a new era of open and accountable government, and yet she has just observed her own Minister of Health sidestepping a very direct question about the conduct of her assistant deputy minister.

She now stands up in her place and tells me that I have the facts wrong. I have emails that say very clearly what happened. Even after Mr. Kaufman alerted the fact that this is not true, guess what? Her own civil service under Mr. Richard Jackson came back and said, "Well, let's word it this way." Mr. Kaufman came back and said, "No, it's still not true."

I'm asking the Premier this: Who can we believe in your government? You have civil servants now who are not telling the truth. Your minister stands up for them. Where is your transparency? Where is your accountability? What is your definition of truth?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said in the original question, I will certainly look into the allegations raised by the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I can also say that he has raised many questions in this House, has made other allegations in this House, and every time I follow up on them, as I undertake to do, almost without exception he gets his facts wrong.

I will happily look into this allegation as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, that's very interesting, because the first time I raised concerns about Ornge, the minister deflected it, and guess what? There is now a criminal investigation into that organization.

Back to the Premier: On the one hand, the Premier is asking us to support anti-SLAPP legislation in this place. That's before this House now. Yet the Premier is carrying on in the tradition of Dalton McGuinty to sue the very people who are bringing forward facts that should be examined by this Legislature.

Can the Premier tell me this: How does she square bringing anti-SLAPP legislation before this Legislature and herself laying lawsuits against the leader of the official opposition and the member from Nepean–Carleton to

in fact ensure that the real issues are not dealt with? How does she square that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, come to order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, second—actually, maybe even third time.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, thank you, Speaker. I believe that that was supposed to have been a supplementary. I'm not sure that it had anything to do with the first question.

What I can repeat is that I will look into these allegations, as I have always looked into the allegations raised in this House by the member from Newmarket–Aurora and by others, and I will happily report back on what I find.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The fact of the matter is that my question was not to the Minister of Health. It was a very direct question to the Premier about how she can square sitting there listening to her Minister of Health avoid the truth when, in fact, she is committed to transparency.

I'm going to ask the Premier one more time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have been listening very carefully. Please withdraw. Let's not weave in and out of this. Just withdraw, and then ask your question.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll withdraw, and I'll ask the Premier a very straightforward question. I asked her to define how she considers truth. What is her definition of truth? I asked her that question, and she refused to answer that.

The people in this province are very confused about that as well. What she has chosen to do is to refer the matter to the courts. I'm going to suggest that I believe that, in the end, it will be a court that makes the decision about this government—it will be the court of public opinion. The court of public opinion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to answer the question of the member opposite. I had referred the first question because it was a health question, and then the question changed.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker: What I believe is in the best interests of the politics of this province, the political discourse and serving the people of the province is that we deal with facts. The only reason that I have challenged the allegations and accusations of the Leader of the Opposition is that they are not based in fact. Otherwise, I would be happy to continue to discuss the

issues around the placement of energy infrastructure and the rules we have changed around the retention of documents, but I will not debate allegations that are completely false.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is to the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock, please. How this place works is to come to order when the Speaker asks. I'm going to ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for seniors can hide his face all he wants. I'm not impressed. Think about this.

The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. Just about every day there are questions on the gas plant. Just about every day, you deflect some of the questions off to your House leader. Just about every day, the House leader tries to implicate the rest of the House in the decision made by your Liberal government by saying that everyone was a party to wanting to get the gas plants taken down.

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Now, this might even be true, but the mistake was putting them there in the first place, and I think it's high time that you quit sidestepping responsibility for blowing 1.1 billion tax dollars and get the House leader to admit the fact that it was putting them up in the first place that caused the problem. When are you going to do that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to remark that it's great that the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has paid very close attention to the answers that we've been giving, because it's very clear that this was a decision that all of the parties had taken, that all of the parties had decided, and we implemented the promise that they had made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that it was the Liberal government that built those plants in the wrong place in the first instance and wasted \$1.1 billion. They also could have rectified the problem without spending all that money if they had just taken some time and done it in the proper way, but they were so concerned about getting on with an election, they didn't care about tax dollars. I want to know: When are we going to get some accountability from your government, and when are you going to quit sidestepping responsibility?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I have a whole binder of quotes here, Mr. Speaker, and once we go through Hansard, I think I'll be able to add some more.

But don't believe me; this is the document that the OPP filed with the courts. You'll want to hear it.

"In September 2011, a provincial election campaign began and the Liberal Party"—this is the OPP—"of Ontario promised to cancel the construction of the plant in Mississauga if they were elected. The Ontario Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party also made similar promises if elected.

"On the 6th of October 2011, the Liberal Party won the provincial election and formed a minority government. Even though they made the same promise during the election, the opposing parties"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

MINING SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This week, we learned of yet another tragic death in an Ontario mine; 36-year-old Paul Rochette, a millwright with two young children, was killed on Sunday in Vale's Copper Cliff smelter.

It has been 30 years since a provincial commission investigated mine safety. Since then, scores of miners in Ontario have been killed, and thousands of others have been injured. Last year, the Premier rejected a public inquiry into mine safety and instead chose a review, but at the very first of public hearings in Timmins and Kirkland Lake, the government didn't advertise or even put out so much as a press release or media advisory to invite participants. Does the Premier think this is acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for this question. I think all of us in the House were saddened to hear of this incident, and I know that our thoughts are with the worker, his family and his colleagues.

As this investigation specifically is ongoing, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specifics of this issue, but what I will tell you is that this government is committed to protecting the health and safety of miners and all workers in the province of Ontario. We know, and we agree, that it's time to thoroughly take a long look at mine safety in this province.

The Chief Prevention Officer for the province of Ontario has undertaken a comprehensive mining safety review. We have an advisory group with industry, labour, and health and safety representatives. We are going to continue this review, because what we know is that we need to improve mine safety, and we need to make it even safer in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Saying the right words is simply not good enough. On April 28, the day of mourning for injured workers, MPPs across this province attend ceremonies to remember those who are killed or injured

on the job. As elected representatives, we need to do everything in our power to end workplace deaths and injuries.

The Premier refuses to conduct an inquiry. Will she commit today that the government review panel into mining safety will have the resources necessary to conduct numerous site visits to mining operations both below ground and above ground and advertise them with vigour?

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: And it would be nice if the Liberal caucus over there paid attention to this question, because people are dying on the job in Ontario and they should be doing something about it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Labour?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would like the House to know that the review has been under way for some time. It was under way before this incident took place and it's going to continue.

Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer has undertaken that review with an advisory group that is comprised of industry reps, labour reps, and health and safety reps. Public consultations are being held right now. They've already been to Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Sudbury; they are going on to Marathon and London in the future.

I am encouraging all Ontarians who are interested in this very important issue to register, attend these sessions and provide their comments as to how we can make mine safety an important issue in this province, which obviously needs to have some more attention—that we need to improve safety. We can make it even safer, I believe, if we all work together and we get all viewpoints on this.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We were to have a very special visitor with us in the House today. Unfortunately, he has not been able to join us, but I would like to tell all of you a little bit about him.

Eleven years ago, at the age of 65, Merv Sheppard became the oldest lung transplant recipient in the history of Toronto General Hospital's program. Since then, he has been working tirelessly with wait-listed patients, recipients and families to help them understand the transplant process.

Merv's selfless work is an inspiration to me and others across this province. It also reminds us of the importance of organ donation. April is Be a Donor Month. The Trillium Gift of Life Network is working with its partners to encourage Ontarians to register to be an organ and tissue donor.

My question for the minister is: How can we best follow Merv's example and each do our part to encourage more Ontarians to help save lives?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the very fine member from Mississauga–Brampton South for that question. I want to join the member in thanking Merv Sheppard for all the work that he has done. I know that he has recently been recognized by the Trillium Gift of Life Network's board of directors for his tireless dedication to raising awareness about organ and tissue donation and transplantation. I know all members in the House join me in congratulating him.

Social media can be a very effective tool, particularly when it comes to reaching out to younger people. That's why TGLN has been very active on Facebook, on YouTube and on Twitter to encourage more people to register their intent to donate their organs.

Today is Trillium Gift of Life Network's MPP Twitter day. I want everyone in the House today to join me in tweeting their support of organ and tissue donation. Here's my tweet: "It takes two minutes to save eight lives. Register to be an organ donor now @ beadonor.ca #beadonor #beahero #howcanyounot."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I know we can all do more as individuals to encourage more Ontarians to register online at beadonor.ca. Make a power of attorney so that someone they trust will ensure their wishes are followed.

But government has a responsibility too, and I am convinced that our government can play a positive role in getting more Ontarians to register as donors.

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I would like to ask the minister, through you, Speaker, what our government is doing to increase organ and tissue donation rates and decrease wait-list times for patients awaiting life-saving transplants.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, organ and tissue donation is one of the greatest gifts any person can give. One person's donation can save up to eight lives and help another 75 through tissue grafts.

I'm proud to say that 2012-13 was a record year, with 1,009 organ transplants in Ontario, 63% more than in 2003, and we've more than doubled the number of registered donors. Some 2.8 million of us are now registered, but that's still less than one in four Ontarians. It's good progress, but it's not enough.

The launch of beadonor.ca has made it easier than ever for Ontarians to become donors. TGLN's Gift of 8 campaign increased registered donors in communities right across Ontario, and we now ask people in all Service-Ontario centres if they'd like to sign up for organ and tissue donation when they renew their driver's licence or Ontario photo cards.

Together, we'll continue to register more Ontarians to be organ and tissue donors.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier.

Premier, yesterday I asked you how much of your taxpayer-funded salary was spent on your personal legal

drama that's playing out here at Queen's Park, and you responded by telling me that you like to run.

Well, we know that you like to run from scandals. We know you like to run from accountability. We know you like to run from the legacy of that Premier you idolized and sat next to for 10 years. Heck, this morning—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, this morning she even ran from very pointed questions directed at her from the member from Newmarket–Aurora—but I digress.

Since you wouldn't answer my question yesterday, I'll give you another shot: How many hours were taxpayers paying your salary so you could deal with legal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The point I was making yesterday was that I work full-time every day for the people of this province. I start early in the morning and I end late at night, and I will continue to do that.

I will continue to push for debate that is rooted in fact. That is what I will continue to push for.

So I'll continue my schedule, and I reiterate my offer—I didn't see you this morning at a quarter to 6, but I'd be happy to see you tomorrow morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Premier. I was busy on my elliptical machine, myself.

We all know that the Premier likes treating taxpayers like her own personal piggy bank, and that's what got us into the mess in the first place. You think that taxpayers are your own ATM machine. But using taxpayer resources to deal with your personal legal problems—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need the member from Etobicoke North to help me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want the Minister of Rural Affairs to come to order, I want the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to come to order, and I want the Minister of Energy to come to order.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. They're getting quite a workout there this morning, aren't they?

They shouldn't be using taxpayer resources to deal with a very personal legal scandal. This is all about the gas plant scandal. They can't spin it anymore. Government resources are used to communicate it, publicize it, plan it—how many taxpayer dollars are you using on your own little legal drama?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I just want to be very, very clear with the member opposite and the people of the province: There are no tax dollars being used in order to advance the legal case. Those bills are

being paid by the Ontario Liberal Party. I would not use tax dollars for that purpose.

Let's just understand what is at stake here. The political discourse in this province must be rooted in fact. I do not take legal action lightly. It is not something that is in my nature; it is not something that I am inclined to do. But it is very important to me, as we discuss the issues in this province, that we talk about facts and that we make—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop, please. Stop the clock. The Minister of Rural Affairs is warned.

New question?

NATURAL GAS RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Recently, we've learned that the Ontario Energy Board approved an application from Enbridge for a 40% increase to natural gas rates. Then we heard that the OEB refused a request from the Consumers Council of Canada and from the Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition for a special session to review the impact of Enbridge's planned rate hike. Even the OEB staff said the request was entirely in order.

Why is the OEB refusing to hear from the consumers, and why were they so quick to grant this drastic increase in gas rate hikes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The consumer groups that intervened in the process, Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition and Consumers Council of Canada, submitted that the board should consider approving the rates on an interim basis and allow more consideration for smoothing out over time, which is exactly what the OEB has done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, Speaker, my question is not about the smoothing. It's about the initial increase.

My office has heard from many constituents, and they're worried about their future. With hydro rates set to increase by 45% and unemployment rates in my riding the highest in the province, constituents are feeling squeezed.

Jim Lamontagne from Welland wrote to my office on March 30 to describe the impact of rising costs on families: "The elderly couple that live beside me that are on a tight budget did not want to turn up their heat this winter due to the fact that they couldn't afford it. They were bundled up with their jackets inside their home all winter."

Did the OEB consider these families when they decided to approve a 40% rate hike without asking Enbridge the hard questions to determine whether or not the rate was even justified?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've heard the members from the third party on occasion raise the question of Enbridge's gas increases and other issues with respect to energy pricing, but I have not heard them offer any solutions. I would like to know what solution you're offering. The

implication is that we should interfere with the proceedings at the Ontario Energy Board, which would be totally, absolutely illegal and irregular, in order to do that.

The Ontario Energy Board's mandate is to look after the interests of the consumer. That is one of its main mandates. It examines the issues, it rules on them and it gives rational reasons for the decisions. One of the rational reasons is that, year over year, energy consumption has gone up by between 15% and 20% because of the nature of the winter. They choose to totally ignore that.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, Ontario's economic landscape is changing. Ontario's small and rural communities are becoming more complex and diverse and face unique challenges when it comes to economic development and job growth.

There are currently a number of programs designed to assist rural municipalities with these challenges, including the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. While these programs address many important priorities, such as business development and innovation, there is always room to do more.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Rural Affairs, could the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to strengthen rural economies?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do appreciate the fine question from the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. As always, creating jobs and growing the province's rural economy are key priorities for this government. This is where initiatives like the Rural Economic Development program come into play.

RED supports high-value, low-cost projects that build a foundation for economic growth. These projects show off the innovation and community partnerships which are so important and emblematic of rural Ontario.

Since 2003, through the RED program, our government has invested \$171 million in 418 projects, which has generated over \$1.2 billion in local economic activity and, more important, 35,000 jobs. I know that by working together we can strengthen rural communities every day in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm glad to hear that the Ontario government takes the economic needs of small and rural municipalities seriously.

I have many small, rural communities in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and many have benefited from business retention and expansion projects in the past through the Rural Economic Development program. However, my constituents would like to know even more about this program: what the parameters are, how they

apply and all the details related to this particular program.

Speaker, through you: Could the minister please elaborate on what kinds of individual projects the Rural Economic Development program does support?

Hon. Jeff Leal: On Monday, I was in the wonderful community of Stratford, Ontario, and I was in the company of a very distinguished former member, Hugh Edgihoffer, who served so ably from 1967 to 1990, and as Speaker from 1985 to 1990. He was there to celebrate with us, along with municipal leaders, \$170,000 that we're investing in local projects, each geared to enhancing the local economy and creating jobs.

First of all, I want to talk about a great one in the little community of Shakespeare. A company there has developed, Quality Fertilizers Inc., which is using the funds to promote its new product line of fertilizers made from recycled natural materials—an enormous breakthrough in the province of Ontario. It's a perfect example of a unique project in rural Ontario, and it's worth investing in.

Local projects like these, funded through RED, are all about key partnerships. By working with our rural partners, working with municipal leaders and working with the private sector, we can do great things—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Earlier today in this question period, I tabled our concern about an assistant deputy minister, Patricia Li, counselling staff to make a statement in a letter to Ornge that was untrue, and found to be so by their own counsel.

Once the Premier has had an opportunity to consider the facts, and it is in fact proven that the assistant deputy minister conducted herself in that way, I want to ask the Premier: What will the consequences be for that assistant deputy minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said that she would look into this issue. She would determine what the facts are. She will do that.

The member is asking me a hypothetical question about what might happen in the future. I do not have an answer to that question, nor do I choose to answer hypothetical questions. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will look into the matter, and we will get the facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIMY RIDGE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Michael Harris: Today marks an important day to honour and remember the sacrifice our Canadian soldiers made during the battle of Vimy Ridge in France on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917. It was 97 years ago that the four divisions of the Canadian forces came together for the first time to occupy the French hill of Vimy Ridge from the German army. This allied victory was a significant milestone for our country as we joined together as one nation to defend our freedom during the First World War.

We cannot forget that this success came with great sacrifice. Throughout the three-day battle, more than 15,000 brave Canadians overtook the Germans under heavy fire. At the highest peak of the ridge where the memorial now stands, soldiers battled machine guns with their bayonets in a long, costly fight to victory. Some 3,600 Canadians were killed during these three days, and another 7,000 were wounded.

I am proud to stand here today on behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature to pay our respects to those who gave their lives. Now, a radiant Vimy sculpture stands as a tribute to these fine men and women from the First World War. The memorial has a statue of a woman representing Canada, a young nation mourning her dead. Below is a tomb to remind us of the soldiers killed in France who have no graves. Today, we wear these pins to honour all the heroes from the battle of Vimy Ridge. I hereby encourage all Ontarians to take some time to reflect today on Vimy day, and I would like to thank the Vimy Foundation for teaching young Canadians about this important part of our history.

WINDSOR SCULPTURE PARK

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It wasn't exactly a rumble in the jungle, but let me tell you about the ultimate showdown that happened recently along the sculpture garden on Windsor's waterfront—quite the battle, I must say, between 32 large-scale, internationally recognized works of contemporary sculpture by world-renowned artists. I want to say kudos to the Windsor Star for launching an online contest to see which sculpture the folks in our area liked the most. They attracted thousands of votes. The ultimate winner was revealed this past Friday.

Can I get a drumroll, Mr. Speaker?

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. The winner is: Tembo the elephant. That's right. Tembo beat out Tiger, Penguins on a Waterfall, Eve's Apple and, finally, Morning Flight. Tembo, by artist Derrick Stephan Hudson, is a bronze elephant—a kind one, not the ones you have to be careful of, roaming around on other parts of the planet. She's more than nine feet tall, 16 feet long and weighs in at about the same weight as eight new cars. Congratulations, Tembo, on your newly minted success.

To all the MPPs, I invite you to Windsor to enjoy these fine pieces of art on Windsor's waterfront. They were donated years ago by the Odette family of Eastern Construction fame. You can't go wrong. The sculpture garden is open year-round. Admission is free. Parking is available. Speaker, I'll even throw myself in as your free tour guide and make a personal introduction to Tembo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't rule drumrolls out of order. The invitation is an open invitation. I appreciate that.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm pleased to rise today in support of a truly wonderful cause. Today is recognized as the international day against bullying, a day dedicated to promoting respect and understanding for everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

We have all been touched by bullying, I'm sure, at some point in our lives, directly or indirectly. That's why I'm pleased to see that schools in my community of Vaughan will be participating in this important day of awareness, wearing pink in celebration of diversity and difference. This is a great initiative that works hand in hand with the work being done by our government.

Almost two years ago, we made a commitment to help eliminate bullying in Ontario schools by introducing the Accepting Schools Act. This act requires that school boards take preventive measures against bullying and also helps to support students by promoting respect for diversity.

We are never too old to take meaningful steps against bullying, and I want to thank everyone in Vaughan who has taken the time today to help contribute to this tremendous cause. Thanks very much.

EVENTS IN HALIBURTON-KAWARTHA LAKES-BROCK

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to provide congratulations to two exceptional achievements in my riding.

The Bantam A Highland Storm beat the Mount Brydges Cougars 7-2 in the third game of their playoff series to win the OMHA all-Ontario title for the A.A. Ash Morrison trophy. Storm coach Drew Bishop said that he was happy with how his team came together and the character that they demonstrated as they battled back from a one-game deficit to start the series. The community, friends and families came out in large numbers to pack the A.J. LaRue Arena in Haliburton to capacity. I'm proud to say that this win marks the first Bantam B division win in Highland Storm history.

Another first is a young golfer who was invited to Augusta, Georgia, to compete in the inaugural Drive, Chip and Putt Championship where the Masters are being played this week. Nyah Kelly, who is only nine years old, travelled from her hometown of Bobcaygeon to Augusta

National Golf Club to compete in the championship on Sunday, April 6. Nyah is only one of 88 young athletes, and just two Canadians, who had the opportunity to compete in this event. To get into the event, Nyah's name had to be selected from more than 17,600 lottery entrants, and she had to come in first or second in two qualifying tournaments in New York state. In her TV interview, Nyah claimed that she wants to play on the LPGA tour one day, and I look forward to seeing her achieve this goal.

I would like to congratulate both the Highland Storm and Nyah Kelly on their outstanding accomplishments.

MINING SAFETY

Mr. Michael Mantha: Forty years ago this April, members of the United Steelworkers of America, Local 5762, took the rare step of striking for better working conditions. These strikers were concerned about exposure to radiation, silica dust and other toxic substances.

The wildcat strike against Denison Mines lasted three weeks, but its impact resonated far beyond Elliot Lake. The message sent by striking miners and their union and the unrelenting pressure by the Ontario New Democratic Party helped push forward the appointment of a royal commission to examine the health and safety of workers in mines. This royal commission, known as the Ham commission, made many recommendations, including the need for mandatory worker participation and representation in workplace health and safety matters. These recommendations and the growing recognition that hazardous working conditions in all sectors of the economy were robbing workers of their health led to the passage of Bill 70, which established the Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1978.

Next week, the United Steelworkers will be hosting a forum to remind and educate participants about the important role the strike in Elliot Lake played in bringing about the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario, as well as to commemorate the miners who had the courage to take action for their health and safety. We thank these USW workers for standing up to improve working conditions in our places of work. However, much still needs to be done to ensure that everyone who goes to work returns home safely to their family.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a statement here in which I'd like to first of all salute, recognize, endorse, and publicize the concept of organ donation. I would like to recognize not only the Ministry of Health but also the Minister of Health for various programs; for example, beadonor.ca, which makes it somewhat easier, more efficient and streamlined to register as a potential organ donor.

To this day, we still have excess cardiometabolic disease, whether it's heart disease, diabetes, stroke, lung disease and so on. Individuals who are unfortunately

forced to wait for too long on transplant waiting lists may not actually acquire the organ that they need. That's why programs such as the Trillium Gift of Life, as was mentioned earlier today in question period—a single organ donor may in fact be able to affect eight lives, and that's an exponential curve that we'd like to support.

We're pleased to say that organ and tissue donation had a record year in 2012 to 2013. More than 1,000 organ transplants, perhaps the ultimate gift of paying it forward, happened in the province of Ontario, an increase of 63%. Yet there is, of course, an extraordinary need, any organ that you could name: kidneys, heart, lungs and so on, even things to do with the eye. So I encourage everyone: Become an organ donor. Register at beadonor.ca.

1510

HUNTER APPRENTICESHIP SAFETY PROGRAM

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to recognize an issue that was brought to my attention in my riding. Youth hunting is a viable activity that introduces our young people to the principles of safe hunting and an appreciation for nature and conservation.

The Ontario Hunter Apprenticeship Safety Program is a program that endeavours to introduce young people to hunting at a responsible young age. The program pairs youth hunters with mentors who teach them about hunting and the importance of safety. Youth are not eligible for hunting tags; therefore, they must use their mentor's tag if they are successful in their hunt. The problem is that most hunters only have a single tag for the week during the hunting season, so while hunters want to mentor youth, they face the trade-off of not being able to engage in the hunt themselves if they give up their tag.

I'm calling on the Minister of Natural Resources to enhance the Hunter Apprenticeship Safety Program by reviewing the tag allocation system with the aim of accommodating our youth hunters. If we can get more apprentices, we'll have more safe and more responsible hunters in the future.

MISSISSAUGA COMMUNITY THEATRE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Ye Chowk Hamara Hai translates into "this is our town square," and this was the name of a play that I attended over the weekend. What made the play special was that it was community theatre at its best. Writer and director local Mississauga resident Zafar Shah also played one of the central characters in this bilingual Punjabi and Urdu language play.

Sitting there in the audience, it was hard not to be impressed by the professionalism and superb production values of the play. Equally inspiring was the message of this entertaining play: the idea that the people of Pakistan and India have much in common and that here in Canada we must reach out and build on our shared history, culture and language to live as one—to live as Canadians. This was community theatre at its best: engaging, relevant and promoting local talent.

I would like to pay tribute to all of the performers: writer, director and actor Syed Zafar Hussain Shah; Rana Sarfraz; Shahid Awan; Gurbir Bal Gogo; Muazam Khan; Karmjit Gill; Paramjeet Deol; Rashda bano, producer; Azfar jameel; Khadija; Ahmed Jafri; Bilal Cheema; Sajjid Ali Khan; Malik Zafar; Asadullah; Dr. Ali Naqvi, actor and producer; Raja Ashraf; Riaz Cheema; and Jamil Zafar.

I would also like to thank Haji Mohammed Jameel, a constituent of mine who invited me to this performance and was one of the sponsors.

I wish this young community theatre group much success in the years to come.

AUTISM

Mrs. Jane McKenna: As we all know, last Wednesday was World Autism Awareness Day. This special day asks us to appreciate autism spectrum individuals for their unique gifts and potential. It also asks us all to dedicate ourselves to making things better for those living with autism.

One of my constituents is doing just that. On May 12, Chris Elgar will set out from Toronto's Billy Bishop airport in a Piper PA-24 Comanche, aiming to fly this light aircraft around the world in 80 days. He will be joined by long-time friend and fellow pilot Dave McElroy. The two men are retired but are by no means cooling their heels.

The duo's amazing feat aims to raise \$250,000 for Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, a world-renowned leader in autism research.

Their first stop will be Scotland, McElroy's adopted home for the past 12 years. There they will announce a second fundraising goal of \$250,000 for Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, which delivers front-line care in time-critical medical emergencies.

From there, they will touch 60 other airports in 25 countries over six continents, logging roughly 78,000 kilometres by July 31. You can follow their daily progress and make donations online at flyrtw80.com.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd..

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.
Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BRUNO'S ALIGNMENT LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr30, An Act to revive Bruno's Alignment Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

JURIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES JURYS

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act to amend the Juries Act / Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurys.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: Over time, I have had inquiries from constituents who are over age 65 and perhaps caring for a spouse being required to fulfill jury duties. The act amends the Juries Act to permit persons 65 years of age or older to elect not to receive a jury service notice and to be re-entered into the jury roll, and also to opt back in in the event that they wish to participate. I'd ask all members to give this consideration for seniors today who are aging at home.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANCER CARE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: April is Daffodil Month in Canada, an opportunity for all of us to show our support for people fighting cancer. I would like to welcome

members of the Canadian Cancer Society who are with us today.

This year, the Canadian Cancer Society celebrates its 76th anniversary. Since 1938, the Canadian Cancer Society has been funding research and cancer prevention programs. It has been supporting people living with cancer, along with their families and caregivers, and it has been advocating for public policies to improve the health of Canadians. My heartfelt thanks go to all the dedicated staff and compassionate volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for their steadfast commitment to the fight against cancer.

I think today is a good opportunity to note just how far we've come in improving cancer care in Ontario. I'm proud to say that over the past 10 years, our cancer system has seen significant improvement. Today Ontario is a leader in cancer care in Canada and around the world. We measure more, we know more, we report on more, and we're committed to enhancing the quality of the cancer system while ensuring accountability and continual improvement.

1520

This past year, after a groundbreaking study led by Cancer Care Ontario, we acted to transition all mammography with digital computed radiography to digital direct radiography to ensure that we're using the most effective technology to detect breast cancer.

Working with our health partners, Health Quality Ontario is now leading the implementation of a province-wide physician peer review program in all facilities where diagnostic imaging services are provided, including mammograms and CT scans.

This commitment to quality is why, according to the Cancer System Quality Index, an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world. But we know we must do even better. Too many Ontarians are diagnosed with cancer every year. Too many sons and daughters, parents and loved ones wake up every day to fight this terrible disease. Our government is committed to giving them the supports they need in their struggle against cancer.

Early detection is key. Cancer screening is easy, and it saves lives. It is imperative that Ontarians get screened for cancer, and we've worked hard to expand screening services and availability across the province.

Our integrated cancer screening program includes breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening under a single, coordinated provincial umbrella.

We broadened the scope of the Ontario Breast Screening Program in 2011 so high-risk women are screened earlier, starting at age 30. This means 90,000 more screens and adding 67 new breast screening sites for a total of 167 screening sites across the province.

We launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program to combat the second-deadliest form of cancer in the country.

And beginning in fall 2013, women eligible to be screened for cervical cancer within the Ontario Cervical Screening Program now receive regular notifications to

invite them to screen, advise them of their test results and remind them when it is time to return for screening.

And now we offer free vaccine to protect girls against the human pap—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Papilloma.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —papillomavirus—thank you, Doctor—which can cause cervical cancer.

In 2009, we further expanded cancer detection by funding the PSA test to help fight prostate cancer, the most common cancer among Canadian men.

We've more than tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs and, since 2006, we've added 57 new cancer drugs to our formulary. We've also invested \$29.5 million in capital funding for Cancer Care Ontario to support cancer radiation equipment upgrades and replacement. These investments have helped to modernize the provincial radiation treatment capacity for cancer and have contributed to improved access to care in more communities around Ontario. And we have the results to show for it: As of November 2013, 98% of cancer patients in Ontario started radiation treatment within the four-week national target.

Of course, Speaker, the best way to fight cancer is to prevent it in the first place, and that was why I was so pleased when all three parties in the House came together on October 9 to pass our government's Skin Cancer Prevention Act. This vital legislation comes into effect on May 1. It will help protect young people against the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation by restricting them from using tanning beds. We could not have passed this legislation without the advocacy of the Canadian Cancer Society and so many others who have been affected by this terrible disease.

I'm also proud of our continued efforts towards our goal of having the lowest smoking rates in the country. Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable cancer, and while we've accomplished a great deal with Smoke-Free Ontario, I know there's more we can and must do.

That's why last November, I introduced new legislation and proposed new regulations to strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. The Youth Smoking Prevention Act would, if passed, prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, and restaurant and bar patios. It would increase fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, making Ontario's penalties the highest in Canada. It would ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products to make smoking less appealing to young people. And it would prohibit tobacco sales on university and college campuses.

I believe that when it comes to the health of our kids, we're all in agreement, so I call on all members of this House to work together to quickly pass this important piece of legislation.

It's also important to recognize the sacrifices made by those caring for loved ones who have cancer. Our government has introduced legislation, the Leaves to Help Families Act, which, if passed, would allow caregivers to focus their attention on what matters most—

providing care and support to their loved ones—without the fear of losing their jobs. This legislation was introduced more than a year ago. It was debated in this chamber for dozens of hours at second and third reading. It's time for members of all three parties to pass this proposed legislation.

I want to again thank the Canadian Cancer Society for its hard work and for its advocacy. My deep appreciation also goes to Cancer Care Ontario for its partnership and hard work in managing our cancer system. And to all of our dedicated doctors, nurses, technologists and all the other providers who treat patients and help the people of Ontario stay healthy, thank you.

My thoughts are with so many Ontarians—too many Ontarians—who battle this disease every day, as well as their families and loved ones. I'm committed to doing everything I can to ensure they get the care they need, so let's wear our daffodils with pride to let people with cancer know that we stand with them in their fight.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today I'm proud to stand in recognition of International Day of Pink.

As members of this Legislature know, the International Day of Pink started a few years ago when a young man in ninth grade was bullied for wearing a pink shirt in a Nova Scotia high school. Two other students took action, buying pink shirts and handing them out to friends to wear to school. This ballooned into hundreds of students wearing pink to show support for the bullied student. They stood up against bullying and showed that it would not be tolerated in their school.

I want to recognize all of our young people who are wearing pink today in schools across Ontario, recognizing that positive actions can make a difference. In particular, I want to thank Jer's Vision for providing such leadership on bullying prevention issues across Ontario—and across Canada, in fact. I would also like to thank all the members who are wearing pink today to raise awareness of the importance of bullying prevention and to help put a stop to it.

Speaker, while we have taken important steps to prevent bullying in our schools, we know that there are still far too many students who feel unsafe or unwelcome. Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning are too often targeted. Sadly, we all know the tragic impact that bullying and homophobia can have.

When I was the chair of our government's safe school action team, I heard first-hand accounts of how devastating bullying can be on a student's success. That's why we have taken measures to make our schools safe, inclusive and accepting, so our students can thrive.

Since our government's Accepting Schools Act passed in 2012, Ontario school boards must take preventive measures against bullying and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for everyone.

Putting an end to bullying cannot be done by one person alone. We need students, parents, school staff and

community groups working together to prevent and address bullying in our schools.

While it is important for the entire school community to play a role in bullying prevention, sometimes it's difficult for students to know who to turn to when they are victimized. That's why we continue to partner with Kids Help Phone so that our young people have access to 24/7 telephone and Web-based professional counselling services.

Speaker, it's incumbent upon all of us to speak out about bullying, not just today but every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

1530

CANCER CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would also like to welcome the members of the Canadian Cancer Society who have joined us in the gallery this afternoon.

I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Daffodil Day, part of the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month, which of course is their national fundraising campaign. This month is an opportunity for us to reflect upon the thousands of people living with cancer in Ontario and to remember our own loved ones lost to cancer.

During this fundraising campaign, volunteers are involved in numerous activities to raise funds for the fight against cancer. The funds raised through this campaign help the Canadian Cancer Society in all the invaluable work they do to prevent and fight cancer.

Daffodil Month is also an opportunity for us to think about how we provide cancer care and supports in Ontario. We are very fortunate to have Cancer Care Ontario, which is the government's cancer care adviser. They are committed to continuous and systematic improvement in prevention, screening and the delivery of care for the patient. But we also know that there are things that we can still do better.

Currently, treatment for cancer is only covered if it is administered intravenously in hospital. Oral treatments, on the other hand, are not covered by the province unless you are over 65 or on social assistance.

Cancer treatments taken orally have been a game-changer, allowing patients to live longer, and we know that 60% of all new cancer treatments being developed are oral medications. By not funding oral cancer treatments, we are creating significant barriers to fair and equal access to cancer treatment. We are discriminating based on cancer type and a patient's age, income and geography. I hope that this is something that we can address in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, in honour of Daffodil Day, I hope the members of this House will take this opportunity to not only reflect on the way that cancer has touched their lives, but also the way that we, as legislators, can improve health care for Ontarians living with cancer.

Finally, thank you to all of the members and volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for the vital work

that you do across all of our communities each and every day.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to discuss the Pink Shirt Day that has raised awareness about bullying in our schools. I want to take note about the definition of bullying that the ministry has provided, and I'm going to discuss it.

Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem or reputation.

Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Bullying can take many forms. It can be physical: hitting, shoving, stealing, or damaging property. It can be verbal: name-calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist or homophobic comments. It can be social: excluding others from a group, or spreading gossip or rumours about them. It can be electronic, which is commonly known as cyberbullying, which is the spreading of rumours and hurtful comments through the use of email, cellphones, social media, websites and text messaging.

I'm very pleased that governments right across the country are raising this issue. I recently went to the movies, and I saw a federal government advertisement that showed and raised awareness about cyberbullying and what cyberbullying means in our communities.

My children enjoy watching TVOKids on the weekend, and I notice that there are segments raising awareness with stories of kids being brave and showing this is an important issue and that they, too, can stand up against the bullies.

D.J. Shepherd and Travis Price of Nova Scotia have started an international movement, and we're very pleased to have them. I know Travis Price actually ran for the Progressive Conservatives in Nova Scotia recently, and we're very proud that he has chosen to take the step in trying to get elected.

But he has two main messages for kids. This is a quote: "You can survive this, and as dark as times may seem, (remember) that someone such as myself, that has been bullied, has been on the edge and has been able to get through this, and here I still stand."

The second point he wants us to remember is that we can stand up for one another. "When you see bullying happen, when you see this in your school, you can stand up, make a difference and make that bullying stop.... It is up to youth to really make a difference in this movement."

"Politicians help with legislation and RCMP officers help protect us, but really it is up to the kids to say enough is enough within our schools and change the culture within the school (so) bullying is no longer tolerated there."

Mr. Speaker, I want to echo Mr. Price's words. He says it right on point.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it's a privilege to rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize the International Day of Pink and to say thank you to every student, every teacher and every Ontarian who stands up to bullying in our province day in and day out. We're standing with them in solidarity to say that Ontario is no place for discrimination.

I also want to thank the activists who devoted their efforts to raising awareness across Ontario. Their work to combat bullying in all its forms is vital to building welcoming communities where intolerance is not accepted.

And I want to say thank you to everyone who has organized an event today in honour of the International Day of Pink.

In particular, Jer's Vision is doing extraordinary work. They are the youth organization that delivers programming to over 75,000 people every year across North America, and which has been instrumental in establishing the International Day of Pink. Jer's Vision continues to lead the fight against homophobia, sexism, racism and discrimination in all its forms, and I commend their work.

Speaker, when bullying occurs in our province, in the hallways, on the playground and online, it's our entire province that suffers. In the most apparent cases, physical violence occurs, but the taunts and slurs of invisible violence do just as much damage. It is that kind of violence that hurts people's minds and breaks their souls. It replaces dreams with shadows that weigh on a person's entire life and the lives of the people they love. Bullying diminishes all of us.

Two years ago, we passed the Accepting Schools Act. New Democrats worked hard to ensure that gay-straight alliances could be formed in our schools and be recognized by that name. I hope that it has made a difference in at least a few lives.

Speaker, there is much work that remains to be done. In particular, when students do not receive the supports they need in school, there are greater opportunities for bullying to occur. When there are too few adults in our classrooms because of inadequate funding from the provincial government, those students are put at risk. There is much more to be done, and together we must do that work to make our province safe and inclusive for all Ontarians.

CANCER CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure for me to add a few words for the great people at the Canadian Cancer Society, in honour of April being Daffodil Month.

The need for the government to do more is ever-pressing, and we know this. I dream of a day when the four big determinants of health when it comes to chronic diseases, such as most cancers, have been worked on, and those, of course, are stop smoking, healthy weight, healthy diet and exercise.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: For sure.

If people in Ontario had access to a robust health promotion campaign that would target those four areas—healthy weight, healthy food, stop smoking and exercise—up to 80% of our chronic diseases would disappear and up to 20% of our cancers would be gone, right here, right now. It would make a huge difference.

We have in front of the House right now my Healthy Decisions Made Easy bill that deals with two of those. It deals with flavoured cigarillos—something that I know is close to your heart, Speaker—as well as calorie labelling. In and by themselves, they're not going to change the world, but they're going to be one small step on a road that has tremendous opportunity to change things for the better.

When you see a volunteer from the Canadian Cancer Society selling some of those beautiful little daffodils that most of us are wearing today, please donate generously.

I can tell you that I was really proud that this House finally passed the tanning beds bill. That was something that all of us can be very proud of. I can tell you of the blood, sweat and tears that the volunteers from the Canadian Cancer Society had put behind that bill. This is a bill that took a long time. It was introduced on many occasions by me, and we had hoped that it would go through, and finally it did, in the fall of 2013. Why? Because of the hard work on the ground of people who support the Canadian Cancer Society, who give their time, their effort and their energy to make things better for themselves, for their loved ones and for all of us.

So to the Canadian Cancer Society, thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

1540

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real privilege for me today to stand in the House and raise a petition that is important to my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas MPAC"—the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—"failed to comply with legislation, international standards and methods recognized by the courts;

"Whereas amendments to the legislation since 2004 have resulted in the weakening of public interests due to ambiguities and interpretations;

"Whereas the public has identified many problems with over-assessments by MPAC, but these over-assessments have not been"—and are not being—"appropriately investigated;

"Whereas the escalation process and appeals process is costly, unfair and ineffective;

"Whereas key facts and evidence are being withheld or ignored that have resulted in costly delays and undermined the public's confidence in MPAC assessments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish a committee to make inquiries into: (a) the applications of the respective home statutes by MPAC, IPC/ON and the ARB"—the Assessment Review Board; "(b) a complete performance review and financial audit of MPAC and ARB; (c) make recommendations to improve the escalation and appeal process; (d) estimate the financial impacts on individual homeowners and fiscal circumstances of taxing jurisdictions, and; (e) make findings of misconduct or wrongdoings" public.

I'm pleased to sign it and support it generally, on behalf of Leonard Subotich, who is from Toronto and who has been arguing with MPAC for years.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

"Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;...

"Whereas Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and the related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and give this petition to the page. Thank you.

GREENBELT

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

I attach my name to it and I will pass it to page Isabella. Thank you very much.

PENSION PLAN

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. It's a surprise today. I get to speak. Anyway, I have a petition here from my constituents as well. It reads as follows:

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the" Bob Rae "government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1 'too-big-to-fail' legislation) which permitted" General Motors and other companies "to underfund the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for" complete "bankruptcy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo Salaried Pension Organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

"That in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made to ensure GM fully funds pension plan 0340950; and continues to provide lifetime benefits to retirees" as promised "and surviving spouses in accordance with its retirement commitments" and promise; "and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect the pensions of" General Motors and other retirees in Ontario, and more importantly, Sears at the current time.

I provide this to Mira, one of the pages.

OSTOMY SUPPLIES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by a lady in Markham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas inflation has risen almost 37% in the 21 years since 1993, and with the cost of ostomy supplies rising, on average, 2% yearly;

"Whereas there has been no increase in the ADP base amount;

"Whereas according to the 2009 survey, the data indicates that the average ostomy pouching system wear-time (flange and pouch) is five days;

"Whereas with an average suggested retail price of \$15 for each change, many persons with an ostomy are spending a minimum of \$1,500 and an average of \$2,400 per year, far exceeding the ADP grant and the intent of the 75% coverage;

"Whereas additionally, people with temporary ostomy receive no government support, adding an additional burden to their health care needs;

"Whereas they may have their temporary ostomy for a number of years, they receive no assistance through the ADP grant as the ostomy may one day be reversed;

"Whereas the association frequently receives phone calls from people who are unable to find the money to buy ostomy supplies;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now and to raise the ADP grant amount to increase the coverage for ostomy supplies back to the 75% level that was set in 1993, and to increase coverage to include people who have a temporary ostomy."

I'll ask my good page Callista to bring it to the Clerk.

GREENBELT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition, I sign it, and I will send it to the table with Calvin.

1550

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great many of the constituents in Oxford.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make this presentation. I will sign the petition.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This petition is on behalf of people from Algoma-Manitoulin and across northern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I support this petition and present it to page Eli to bring down to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Speaker, it's a particular pleasure to present this petition in front of you, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree, sign it and send it to you via page Milana.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes mainly from the people of Brantford, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health;

"Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family's success;

"Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems, and be resources of breastfeeding expertise in the community;

"Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants at Brantford General Hospital which was highly utilized;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant-led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Caroline to bring it to the Clerk.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to have this many opportunities to represent my constituents' needs. This is another one that is scary; it's going to be debated today with Bill 173.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a revenue-neutral, temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas emissions and vehicle failure rates have dropped dramatically between 1999 and 2010, the Drive Clean program has clearly outlived its usefulness; and

"Whereas Ontario's new Drive Clean tests are"—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole:—just a moment; the Minister of the Environment is talking—"recording higher-than-normal failure rates, even in cases where there is nothing wrong with a vehicle's emission systems" at all—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of the Environment is here, too. I hope he's listening.

"Whereas this causes added inconvenience and higher costs for Ontario drivers; and

"Whereas in the case of pre-1998 vehicles, it is becoming increasingly difficult for owners to find an establishment that will provide the 'tailpipe' test for vehicles without the required on-board computer; and

"Whereas the Drive Clean program has generated a" significant "profit to the government of \$19 million over the past two years"—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll get your time later—"despite a Supreme Court ruling that revenue-neutral government programs cannot generate a profit, the government is refusing to return this surplus to Ontario taxpayers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ontario government to take immediate action to end the Drive Clean program and return accumulated profits to Ontario taxpayers."

I've been badgered the entire time. I'm standing up for my constituents, and I'm signing this petition and giving it to Jonah—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFE), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ASSURER LA SÉCURITÉ DES ROUTES DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Murray?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a great pleasure to lead off debate, I won't just say for my party, but I think this is one of those rather remarkable pieces of legislation that—

Mr. Mike Colle: You're going to share time with me and the member from Scarborough—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm getting to that, don't worry. I'm getting to that. My mentor, obviously, and dear friend, and parliamentary assistant, and long-time city councillor, and former TTC member and my big brother, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, will be sharing time with me, as will the father of the distracted driving initiative, my friend from Scarborough-Rouge River. I'm very honoured to share time with them today.

Mr. Mike Colle: Very good.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much. I want to assure you that the member for Eglinton-Lawrence will keep me on track and on time for the rest of this.

It's a great pleasure. For the past 12 years, Ontario's roads have placed among the highest in safety in North America, consistently ranking either first or second. Our government is very proud to have continued that tradition—I think members in both parties opposite who served in government, and their records, have shared that. This is a shared legacy of the people of Ontario and the actions of all parties.

When you think about that for a moment—Mr. Speaker, you're from Stoney Creek, a very fine area. It's a little warmer. It's not quite the Windsor banana belt, but it's a little more temperate than Ignace or Dryden or those vast areas of northern Ontario which have very challenging weather conditions. That we can beat California, Texas, Iowa and Kansas to maintain safe roads is a real tribute to the people of Ontario: our police, everyday Ontarians who drive, and I think it's something all of us as MPPs and all of our parties share. It's a shared legacy which we want to leave to our children as their inheritance as well.

We could not have achieved this without the OPP, our municipal police services, MTO staff, our private contractors—the entire community of people who keep our roads safe. We also acknowledge the work of hundreds of individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to promote and improve road safety in Ontario. These partners work in areas like cycling, impaired driving, distracted driving, injury prevention, pedestrian safety, trucking and countless others to help raise awareness and advocate for change and save lives. The Canadian Automobile Association, the cyclists unions, Ontario Trucking Association—I could go on and probably name about 50 organizations from Cornwall to Kenora. We are blessed with the civil society base of volunteers who care about safety on our streets and on our highways.

Despite Ontario's excellent road safety record, there are still more things the province can do to improve its

road safety programs and outcomes. On average, one person is killed every 15 hours and one person is injured every eight minutes in Ontario. Even though with a safe record, that is a threshold we can improve. That is why we continue to look for new and effective ways to save lives by keeping all Ontarians safe on our roads.

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Keeping people safe, Mr. Speaker, is the single largest priority of this legislation, and I think as it contains legislation from members in all parties, you'll see that commitment throughout the bill and throughout this House.

We introduced the legislation last month. If this is passed, it will help reduce collisions, injuries, fatalities on our roads and highways. This bill is the result of the collaboration of members of this Legislature. It also builds on different private members' bills and has laid the groundwork for several of the road safety issues we need to address.

I want to thank several of them: the MPPs for Eglinton–Lawrence, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Kitchener–Waterloo, who have formed the cycling caucus. They've been advancing that. This is something I wish we'd see more of in this House, where we claim our right as MPPs to represent our people and put the people's business ahead of politics. I want to acknowledge those three MPPs, particularly, for their leadership.

I also want to acknowledge one of my mentors, a friend, and someone who has inspired a large part of this bill, whose private member's bill dealt with the important issue of distracted driving after a tragedy in his community and a terrible loss of life. That is the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, MPP Bas Balkissoon, who has been passionate about this. I am glad that this bill reflects and respects the work of that member and the constituents he represents.

Also, the member from Parkdale–High Park, MPP DiNovo, who is supporting bicycle safety and proper passing distances between motorists and cyclists—I've had the pleasure to spend quite a bit of time with her. She shared her concern and, quite frankly, she has raised this matter before and has seen some criticism for it. I am glad to see her work reflected in this bill. I want to thank my friends in the third party, the New Democrats, for their leadership on this issue as well.

The legislation includes the efforts of our friend and very distinguished member of this Legislature, as I said earlier, the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller. He has advocated for allowing cycling on paved shoulders of provincial highways, and other measures, including paved highways as a matter of course in all highway construction. If you've been up to the beautiful part of the province he represents, cycling tourism as well as regular tourism is a big part of life.

Mr. Miller and I have had some very positive conversations, and we discussed—people often think of cycling, for example, as an urban issue. Well, one third of all trips in Ontario are less than five kilometres, which means that one in three of us could probably do our commute by walking, by—

Interjection: Cycling.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —cycling.

There was a study that just came out that showed that the parts of Peel region where people can walk had the lowest levels of diabetes, and the areas in which people can't walk and need to use a car, where there aren't walkable neighbourhoods, had the highest levels of obesity and diabetes.

It's interesting: They say that 70% of trips in many smaller and mid-sized communities can actually be done by cycling. There's actually a higher level of cycling in many parts of rural Ontario than there is in urban Ontario.

To my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington: Your community is one that has some brilliant initiatives on cycling, which I know you are supportive of.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't also mention my friend from Simcoe North, MPP Garfield Dunlop, who has advocated for the move-over legislation. This is an initiative that will really reduce the number of fatalities of tow truck drivers and other emergency vehicles that show up on the scene, where those workers are particularly vulnerable.

It has been a while since we've had a bill that I think so many parties can lay claim to. I've often said in this House that my favourite time is private members' public business, on Thursday afternoon, because it's the one time we get to treat each other with a little more respect. It's the least partisan time of the week.

I made this commitment to my colleagues, and the Premier asked us to take this kind of approach as ministers: to be a lot less partisan, to actually remember that we're MPPs and Ontarians before we're Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats, labour, business or wherever we came from. This bill reflects that, and I don't say this in an arrogant way, that somehow the government has a monopoly on this. This reflects a higher level of non-partisanship, I think, from all members of this House; otherwise, this bill would not have been possible without their co-operation. The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act addresses many of the issues of safety and well-being of all those who use our roads.

If passed, this legislation would strengthen our existing impaired-driving laws. The legislation would also address the growing problem of distracted driving, increasing fines to as high as \$1,000 and applying three demerit points. That would be set by justices; what we're doing today, because we don't set that, is creating the range, which I think is consistent with the will of the courts, evidenced by recent decisions of some of our justices in court.

In 2012, Ontario had the lowest impaired-driving offence rate in Canada. This is a rather remarkable achievement, but there is more we can do to address drinking and driving in our province, so we are proposing to require more drivers who are repeatedly caught drinking and driving to complete an intensive alcohol education program. This would be followed by a treatment and

ignition-interlock monitoring program if they continue to repeat this dangerous behaviour.

This reduced suspension with ignition-interlock conduct review program would also be expanded to repeat offenders. Research indicates—and it is quite extensive research in many places—that installed ignition-interlock devices are effective at preventing drinking and driving. That is why we would extend the program, to reduce the risks posed by repeat drinking and driving by monitoring their driving behaviour. What we want to make sure of is that we are using the techniques that have worked most effectively around the world.

The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act would also be the first step in strengthening identification of medically unfit drivers, and this is a challenging issue. Ontario's mandatory reporting program for physicians is a key method of identifying individuals with a medical condition that makes it unsafe for them to drive. This bill would ensure that in the future the Ministry of Transportation can accept reports from a broader range of health care practitioners.

As that science and the medical review/nursing review bodies are establishing those standards, we will make sure that these are not political or bureaucratic decisions, but that they are in fact based on proper medicals and proper science. This will help keep our medical review program among the most stringent in North America, and serve to help quickly remove unsafe drivers from our roads. I want to thank the Ontario Medical Association, the CAA and also seniors' groups for helping us with this piece of the legislation.

We are also proposing to improve the safety of tow truck drivers. As I mentioned earlier, tow truck drivers can face significant risk when they help motorists on roadsides of busy highways. If this bill is passed, motorists will be required to slow down and, if safe to do so, move over when they approach stopped tow trucks with flashing yellow lights on the side of the road, as is the case with police officers and other emergency responders. This measure would help ensure that drivers exercise greater caution with stopped tow trucks providing help to motorists, preventing needless collisions.

This legislation would also be one step in giving Ontarians healthier, more convenient and safer choices in how they get around. These proposals would introduce measures to improve the safety of cyclists, such as requiring all drivers to maintain a minimum distance of one metre when passing cyclists and vice versa, and increased fines and demerit points for dooring of cyclists, which all of our police authorities tell us is a problem.

This is a law that now exists in 29 of the 50 states and in Nova Scotia, and was heavily advocated for by the Ontario Provincial Police, the CAA and others who wanted something better than simply "reasonable distance," which is almost unenforceable. As many pointed out—both motorist organizations and cyclist organizations—it's very hard to educate people to a standard that isn't specific.

The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act would also help keep pedestrians safe in our communities. Overall, the

number of pedestrians killed in Ontario has declined significantly over the last 25 years, but pedestrians still represent approximately one in six motor-vehicle-related fatalities, and ironically, this often happens in pedestrian corridors. That is why the bill would require drivers to yield the whole roadway to pedestrians at school crossings and pedestrian crossovers, and would support municipal requests for new pedestrian crossing devices.

As you may know from recent reports, Mr. Speaker, we do still have some challenges, in spite of many enhancements, with motor vehicle inspection stations. The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act would modernize Ontario's Motor Vehicle Inspection Station—MVIS—program to protect consumers and improve the standards of this important program.

The system we now have was established in the 1970s and is no longer working the way it should be. We need to improve the way vehicles are checked and branded, to make sure that unsafe vehicles are not being fraudulently inspected, rebuilt and finding their way onto Ontario roads.

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If you've been watching some of the consumer programs of late, you can see some of the horrible vehicles that seem on the outside—because they've had bodywork done—to be in reasonably good condition, but, in fact, are literally a car wreck waiting to happen.

Currently, ministry-licensed stations and mechanics that fail to follow our standards can often continue their business for a lengthy period of time after they have been identified as a problem. These are often businesses and individuals who are knowingly endangering lives by illegally repairing damaged vehicles.

If passed, this legislation would replace the current licences and performance contracts between inspection stations and the Ministry of Transportation and secure a third party contract administrator to oversee the program, consistent with initiatives in other jurisdictions that have been much more effective than the program we currently have in place.

We anticipate that these new contracts would include many remedies to allow quick and effective action against inspection stations that do not meet our standard. There is a strong commitment from the government to work with members on both sides of the House to achieve those standards and a methodology that would be satisfactory.

In the event that a station's actions warrant termination of its contract, we expect such action could be taken more quickly than under the current system. These measures would create more rigorous oversight to make sure inspection standards are being followed and can be enforced quite quickly. They would also protect consumers from stations and mechanics operating without a ministry licence or without adhering to ministry standards.

The program will continue to include offence provisions that will allow enforcement officers to lay charges in serious situations, and we are proposing to standardize

finest and allow courts to impose short-term imprisonment upon conviction for certain offences.

This legislation would also extend the current six-month limitation period for offences so the ministry would be better able to lay charges when it learns of misconduct after the fact. Evaluating these stations more rigorously from action taken more quickly will prevent unsafe vehicles being fraudulently inspected, rebuilt, sold to consumers and driven on our roads.

The legislation would also transfer regulation-making authority for the program to the Minister of Transportation and the ministry and would be authorized to set standards by ministry directive. Again, we look forward to those discussions with members on both sides of the House. This would help change inspection standards more quickly to keep them up-to-date with modern advances in technology: things like telematics and many other new advances that have come out in the last decade.

This legislation would improve mandatory vehicle branding programs to prevent vehicle fraud and protect consumers who buy used vehicles. I want to thank the Minister of Consumer Services for her work on this with us as well. Under this program, vehicles that have been written off because of collision or flood are branded by the minister as either salvage or irreparable, and vehicle owners can make written appeals to challenge the accuracy of the vehicle's brand.

Currently, many requests are submitted by individuals who have knowingly purchased an irreparable or salvage vehicle and appeal the brand based on fraudulent motives. If passed, only the person who owned the vehicle at the time it was damaged and reported it to the ministry would be allowed to appeal its brand. This would prevent appeals by those looking to make a profit by illegally rebuilding vehicles or selling damaged vehicles to unsuspecting consumers.

The ministry would also be permitted to appoint a third party administrator to review and decide brand appeals. The vital changes to motor vehicle inspection and mandatory vehicle branding programs proposed in this bill would protect consumers from unscrupulous parties and keep unsafe vehicles off the roads.

There are components in this bill, as many people know, on cycling, walking and active transportation, which are the healthiest and least expensive solutions to congestion. A growing number of Ontarians are choosing cycling as a way to get around, and that's why last year we released CycleON, Ontario's 20-year strategy to become the most cycling-friendly jurisdiction in North America. If passed, the legislation would build on the strategy to give cyclists more ways to travel and improve their safety on our roads and highways.

The Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe act would introduce several measures to further help motorists and cyclists to share the road safely: increasing fines for drivers dooring cyclists from a range of \$60 to \$500 to be more consistent with similar offences in the range of \$300 to \$1,000, and raising the demerit points from two to three. Where practical, motorists would be required to

keep a minimum distance of one metre between their vehicles and cyclists when passing. These measures would help cyclists stay safe when they travel near vehicles on our roads and on highways.

I particularly want to thank the Ontario Trucking Association, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Canadian Automobile Association, who really advocated for these standards. Not only have they advocated for the standards, but they're also already, even in advance of this proposed legislation, undertaking greater education measures with their members, hopefully being optimistic that this House, given the appearance of all-party support, would do that. I want to thank them, because the education and enforcement are critical parts of this.

These measures would help all of us stay safe when we travel near vehicles on roads and highways. The legislation would also help ensure that cyclists are visible by allowing the use of flashing lights on bicycles and increasing the fines for cyclists who do not use the required bicycle lights and reflectors.

We propose to promote safer opportunities for cycling by allowing cycling on paved shoulders of unrestricted provincial highways, reflecting one of the private member's bills. This would improve cycling for both cyclists and motorists, allowing cyclists to keep out of the flow of high-speed traffic.

The legislation would also support cycling in urban areas by allowing municipalities to create contraflow bike lanes, which we don't do now. If you've been to Manhattan recently, one of the densest areas, the contraflow bike lane program there is extraordinarily effective and has reduced fatalities and eased motorists. These measures would provide more direct routes and connectivity for cyclists, giving cyclists more choices and creating less congestion on our roads. That's why we're proposing measures to support cycling and active transportation with our municipal partners. I want to thank the Association of Municipalities of Ontario as well for their work.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have one last issue before I conclude, and that is the issue I started with, which is distracted driving. It is currently illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cellphones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices. When I was walking home from work yesterday, I just by happenstance kept account of what percentage of drivers, when I looked into the cars, were actually texting. It averaged one in four people I walked by, walking from Queen's Park all the way to Parliament and Mill Street the other day. One in four drivers had a cellphone in their hand while they were driving during rush hour—one in four. This gives you a scale of how serious and how ridiculous it is. One of them I noticed because I nearly ended up on her fender. It is currently illegal.

As I said, the evidence speaks for itself: A driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be in a crash than drivers who are focused on the road. This is why safe driving requires undivided attention. Drivers need to

focus on the task at hand. Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. All road users need to feel safe on our roads and highways, no matter how they choose to travel.

We have great success in keeping our roads safe. Thanks to all of us—current and past governments—Ontario is the North American leader in road safety. I encourage all members to support this legislation.

One last thing on collision trends: In Ontario, fatalities from distracted driving are exceeding those of drinking and driving already. More people are being killed as a result of that, and the fines and the changes in the licensing system would go a long way.

I just want to conclude by saying that this is a historic piece of legislation. I want to thank the official opposition and the third party for their leadership as well. We often say we all support these things—and every party is guilty of it—and then we rag the puck and don't get it through the House. I'm hoping this is something that we can get to committee very quickly.

I want to commit to you, as I had when we started this process, to maintain this as a nonpartisan discussion. I don't think road safety is a Liberal, Conservative or NDP idea, or a Green Party idea; it's just a good idea we all share. I look forward to working with members on all sides of the House for the speedy passage of this bill so we can save lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It was very thought-provoking to hear the minister speak, because all these issues he raised about safety on the roads really touch all of us in all of our communities. I know he mentioned that there are four private members' bills that are incorporated in this bill: the member from Scarborough—Rouge River's bill on distracted driving, the member from Parkdale—High Park's bill about cycling safety and passing distance, MPP Dunlop's bill about tow truck operator safety, and MPP Miller's bill. So there are ideas from individual MPPs.

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Just as they put forward the bills, I remember that over 10 years ago we had a situation where a car ran a red light in my riding and killed a person and injured nine other people who were waiting at the streetcar stop. Out of that people said, "What can we do? These people are running red lights." Then I found out that this red-light running was an epidemic, really, that people are always trying to beat the red light and T-boning people. So I put forward a private member's bill at that time to introduce red-light cameras at high-collision intersections. I know the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London was talking about how frustrated he was yesterday with his Ryan's Law, waiting a year to get a bill in. I think it took me about five years until we finally got a bill that allowed red-light cameras to be installed in high-collision intersections, because the technology helped save lives. The police could not babysit every intersection, so we needed improved technology. But that was an initiative that came

out of something that happened in my riding, for people's safety, and I'm sure the other MPPs have had similar initiatives come forward on traffic safety. That's why these things need attention when they're brought forward by MPPs.

Just to reiterate, this bill is about safety and better roads and better conditions on the roads. We sometimes take for granted that these roads have to be built in the first place. They have to be maintained, and they have to be maintained at a high standard, because if the road isn't maintained at a high standard, you can see what can happen in terms of lack of proper snow clearing or proper level of repair—the proper shoulder repair. If you've driven through the GTA in the last couple of months, you can see the horrendous conditions our roads are in. In all my life, I've never seen so many potholes. Those potholes are a reflection of the fact that not only has it been a severe winter with a lot of extra salt being used but the fact that, over the years, municipalities and the provincial government think, "We'll just resurface the road and it will be okay." So the roads look okay, but basically, many of those roads haven't been rebuilt properly and made to withstand the ice conditions, the salt conditions.

Everybody says, "Oh, yeah, we'll just drive," but we need to invest in our roads. We need to invest in transit. We need to invest in road safety. And it's not a one-time investment of capital dollars. You have to pay people to work on keeping our roads safe, whether it's the police, whether it's road maintenance crews—an investment of dollars. It's a constant work in progress.

In the GTA, we're up to about six million people, with how many cars? We've gone from probably about 500,000 cars in the GTA to over, probably, a couple of million cars. It's amazing the number of added cars. And have we really built new roads? We've widened the 401 continually. We've widened sections of it. It's never stopped. But somehow we expect that our roads are still going to be safe, are going to handle all these extra millions of cars. In Toronto, we've built one new piece of road in 20 years—one piece of road. We're saying, "The cars are everywhere. We can't do anything about it." Well, everybody's driving more. We're not building any new road infrastructure. We have to continue to invest in road infrastructure, in making them safe and making them, again, up to standards. That kind of investment is critical to make our roads safe.

Plus there have to be laws which remind people about the serious responsibility we have in our roads. I looked at the stats. The number one killer in BC now is distracted driving. It's no different than other provinces now. It used to be drunk driving. We used to be worried about speed. Those are not the killers now. The killer is—I see the Minister of Transportation on his cellphone there.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm taking notes, Mike.

Mr. Mike Colle: Anyways, distracted driving is something we're all plagued with because of the fact that our cars are no longer four wheels with a motor. Our cars are entertainment centres. I mean, if you go into some of

these fancy new cars and you look at the dashboard, you'll say, "Holy God, where am I, in a movie theatre?" There are so many gadgets. How can you keep your mind on the road? You've got all these things flashing and you can email, text, see movies. You can talk to your mother-in-law in Shanghai. You can do anything in your car. It's taking away from paying attention to the road. It's tempting, because all these things are at our fingertips. Therefore, something has to be done about distracted driving.

I know that the member from Rouge River has put forward a private member's bill to try and deal with this, and it's incorporated in this bill that there has got to be a heavier penalty, because people are doing it continually. They're being induced to do it by the way our cars are now filled with all these incredible gadgets, which are supposedly to enhance safety, yet they augment your distraction at the same time. That's the contradiction. We need to have this stiffer penalty and demerit points, which they're doing in other provinces.

I just want to mention that there's also increasing conflict at times, especially in cities, sometimes between pedestrians, motorists, cyclists. I think one of the reasons for that is because our roads are so congested that people are getting totally stressed out by the constant waiting in traffic, the constant lost time. Therefore, you've got motorists that are uptight; you've got cyclists that are trying to get by, and they're getting uptight.

You've got pedestrians who are trying to cross the street, and—Mr. Speaker, you've seen it too—sometimes pedestrians are on their cellphones as they're walking across. That's one thing that really bothers me. I mean, we have all the things about motorists and cyclists that bother me, but I see pedestrians with this very arrogant attitude. They're walking across the street; they don't even look left or right. They think it's their God-given right to go across the street, texting, without even looking to see if there's a cyclist or a motorist coming, making a right-hand turn. They just walk ahead as if that light is green and, basically, they don't have to pay attention.

We all have to pay attention, whether we're motorists, whether we're cyclists or whether we're pedestrians. That's critical for road safety. But it's really hard to pay attention when you've got two things in your ear and you're texting. There are even cases of cyclists that are texting and so forth. We need to put some kind of protocol in place which cools the temperatures down and gets people to be more cognizant of the shared responsibility we have on roads.

It's just like when we make right-hand turns. I always try to look in my mirror to make sure there isn't a cyclist coming in the right-hand line. In the past that wasn't the case, but now, the cyclists are on the right. So you have to look at the cars, the pedestrians and a possible cyclist coming in on your inside lane. It is a very daunting task to drive these days, despite all the gadgets and all the safety devices, which are good, but, again, they're not the answer.

In this bill, there's also a number of initiatives which make our roads safer and promote safe cycling. The

reality is that the cycling community, and the number of people cycling, is exploding all over the province, whether you go to the Niagara Peninsula, whether you go to Hamilton Mountain, whether you go to Kitchener, whether you go to Prince Edward Island or Windsor or the banana belt by Pelee Island, or by Erieau and those wonderful places down there where you go smelt fishing—not smelt fishing, perch fishing. The smelt have disappeared, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of the Environment is here; he'll tell us why.

Anyway, the thing about it is that cycling is happening. It is an incredible industry. There are so many people opening up cycle repair shops, bike repair shops. They're opening up all kinds of sales of bicycles. Cycling tourism is huge. It's a great generator of jobs. They're connected with the wine industry, with the restaurants, with sightseeing, with healthy living. Cycling is a reality.

I know that, myself, in the last couple of years, I was always a casual weekend cyclist with my Raleigh bike. But in recent years, I had a young man approach me, and his name is Michael Ovens. He is a blind cyclist. He cycles on the back of a tandem. He does this charity ride that goes from Toronto to Collingwood, and they have these tandem bikes. He said, "Oh, you can do it." I said, "Well, I haven't been on a bicycle"—and he wanted me to do 70 kilometres, half. I said, "I don't know if I can do it." But I did train, and I did go to some spinning classes. Anyway, I learned a lot about what's happening, in terms of where cycling is going, through Michael Ovens and his Cycle for Sight initiative, which raises money for people with blindness.

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The fact is that cycling is there. We have to make it safer, and that's why, in this bill, we look at the dangers of dooring, which happens to cyclists and also motorists. Certainly there is the whole issue about paved shoulders—Norm Miller has talked about this for a number of years—where it was prohibited. This is the crazy thing: You could not go on the shoulder with your bicycle. A big transport truck is coming at you, and you couldn't ride on the shoulder. It was prohibited by law on the 400-series and the major highways. This bill says you will be able to cycle on the shoulder and, hopefully, this will mean enhanced, safer shoulders for our cycling community.

But this is the reality all across the province of Ontario: We have to have good rules that apply to the motorist, the pedestrian and the cyclist. In this legislation here, we're trying to put forward a pretty practical framework of safety rules—that's really what it comes down to—that people of all ages have got to adhere to, again motorists, cyclists, pedestrians.

It's a reminder that we have to constantly improve safety because of the increased speed, the increased number of cars, the increased number of cyclists. It only makes sense that we go ahead and put these protective rules in place that are necessary because, whether it's our children, our grandchildren, our loved ones, our neighbours that are in cars, innocently going to work, taking a

bike to work or walking to work, whatever it is, they deserve to have their safety protected. That's what the intent of this bill is, to try and bring in some safety standards that can be applied in a reasonable way across the province of Ontario so we will have safer roads.

Again, the thing is, roads are part of our economic reality. If we don't have good roads, basically our economy comes to a standstill. We have to keep our roads moving with cars. We have to keep our roads safe. It's an economic reality that we have to invest in our roads. We have a great infrastructure across Ontario, but we have to invest even more to make them sustainable, so we don't end up with pothole hell, as we have here in Toronto this year. We have to invest in safety by road maintenance and good rules.

We cannot assume a person is going to always be doing the right thing, because as human beings, we're constantly distracted, we're constantly in a rush. Every time we get in a car, it seems we're late for something. We never get in a car and say, "Oh well, I can take my time." We always say, "Well, I have to get there. I'm late." That kind of mindset, because of this rush-rush society we're into, adds to the added danger on the roads. We have to try and slow things down, get rid of all those gadgets. Maybe we should sell those gadget-free cars, just the old dashboard—remember when all you had on the dashboard was a radio? That's all you had. Maybe we should go back to the old—my 1957 Ford just had a little radio. Anyway, it was a lot safer in those days.

We need to invest in safety, and that's what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. It's about investing in the safety of the people of Ontario. Whether, again, you're in a big city or a small town, we've had horrific accidents, sometimes on our back concession roads, so everybody has not to be supportive of this investment in safety. That's the bottom line about this bill.

I hope that members on all sides look at a way of bringing forward this agenda of this bill, the Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe act, so that we can do our job as MPPs.

I thank you all for listening and I pass the torch on to my esteemed member from the far east in Toronto, Scarborough—Rouge River member Bas Balkissoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to rise today and join the Minister of Transportation and my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence in providing full support to Bill 173, Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, as it was introduced by the minister earlier.

The bill aims to amend sections of the Highway Traffic Act dealing with impaired driving, pedestrian safety, tow truck safety, medical reports, vehicle inspection systems and a number of miscellaneous amendments, including one that is very important to me: distracted driving. I just want to say that I offer my thanks to the minister for his support on distracted driving concerns and having my suggestion included in this act.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to focus my comments on distracted driving. As you know, last fall I introduced my private member's bill, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, Bill 116, which aimed to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while operating a motor vehicle.

If you will recall, the bill was named after Manoranjana, a 52-year-old woman who was tragically killed in an accident involving a truck that crashed into a TTC bus on Steeles Avenue at Middlefield Road in my riding, on Tuesday, August 13, in the year 2013. Twelve other individuals were injured in the accident, including three people who were taken to Sunnybrook Hospital's trauma centre. I just want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that, as you can see, one person's error has created several other people's hardship, including one person who died. That person's entire family was affected.

There were two specific components to my bill. It proposed to increase the penalty for using hand-held devices while driving to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700. More importantly, the bigger piece of my bill proposed to add three demerit points to each offence.

I am pleased that, in the interim, the Chief Justice recently increased the set fine to \$280, which is within the current range of \$60 to \$500. I hope that, when Bill 173 is approved, the set fine will increase further. I will have to continue to work with the minister and hopefully somehow get to the Chief Justice to make sure that that fine is set at something that is very significant.

Bill 173 proposes a number of other important changes to make our roads safer. I'm happy that my private member's bill has been adopted and included as part of the larger bill, along with my colleagues from the other side of the House who have also had their private members' bills included, but most important to me is that Bill 173 proposes a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$1,000. The minister has gone a little bit deeper than I had proposed, and I'm happy to know that he has a higher concern than I do. So I'm pleased to be here to support this bill.

I agree with the minister that it is more appropriate to deal with demerit points in regulations, as he has proposed to me. The reason I do that is because, in the current Highway Traffic Act, demerit points have always been dealt with in regulations. I recognize that.

Unfortunately, as a member, when I propose a bill I don't have access to regulations, so I did what was available to me, which was to propose demerit points in Bill 116. I'm going to say that I'm pleased that the minister is quite happy to entertain my request to change the demerit points; he's going to do it through regulations, and I'm going to be waiting patiently till he gets that done.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I heard him.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My colleague here says that he heard it, so I've got a witness.

Distracted driving continues to be a growing concern. Since introducing my private member's bill, my staff and I are more aware of this. We continue to see people using cellphones while driving.

The minister described his own incident, but I want to describe another one. I was on the highway, and the car that was in front of me was travelling well below the speed limit and somewhat erratically. You could see it shifting along the highway. Being a little frustrated, I took my time and waited, and at the first opportunity, I passed the vehicle. Sure enough, the person was on the phone, not realizing that they put themselves at risk and they also put everybody else around them at risk. I was at risk having to pass the vehicle. So it's a little frustrating, and I knew that something had to be done. I'm glad the minister has brought this bill so quickly, since introducing my private member's bill.

1640

I'm hoping that since included in this bill are other members' bills on all sides—all three parties—we will all join together and make sure we let this bill go through second reading very quickly and let it go to committee, and that it will come back here and we'll adopt it. Hopefully we'll have this legislation in place very, very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, CAA recently conducted a survey of their members, and the result of that survey stated that 85% or more of respondents feel that sending text messages or emails, reading text messages or e-mails and/or using an app on a smartphone is unsafe while driving a vehicle. That tells you that a lot of the driving public out there sees this as an issue, and therefore they're depending on us, as government, to do something about it.

Based on recent CAA time trials, replying to a text message takes an average of 33 seconds. I say to all of us, think about 33 seconds. If you're driving at 60 clicks an hour, it's a long distance you're going to travel without seeing where you're going and without seeing what the traffic in front of you is doing. A whole lot of things can happen in that short period of time. It really does not take a lot to create an accident and put a lot of people in jeopardy. So I just say to all of us that we need to take this bill very seriously. Let us put it into legislation very, very quickly.

Distracted driving is a preventable offence, and as legislators we must take proactive measures to improve safety on our roads, but not only that; we should improve the safety of our constituents and our communities. The driver will always take chances, but it's the other innocent people that I think we, as legislators, have to be concerned about.

It is proven that if you text and drive, most likely you're going to get into an accident. I would say that because of that, I want to thank the minister once again for doing what he's doing here today. Hopefully all of us will support this bill going through very quickly.

I just want to compare this bill to the seat belt law that came in many, many years ago. When the seat belt law came in, it took 13 years for legislators to realize that just a law saying you must wear your seat belt did not bring compliance. It was when demerit points were added that the police reported that compliance was achieved, to the

point today where we have more than 95% compliance with that particular change.

The law was changed for hand-held devices in 2009; we're about five and a half years away. We recognize we have a problem. I think we need to do it now and do it quickly, and hopefully we'll achieve compliance a lot faster than the drinking and driving and seat belt legislation, as it occurred in the past.

I would say to all of us that this is an important law. I want to congratulate the minister for including all the issues of my colleagues and creating an act that is non-partisan. It's really about our community, our residents and the people we represent here in the Legislature on a daily basis.

I also want to thank Mr. Ken Kandiah and his family for their commitment in asking me to push this government to change the law. They wanted to make sure that their sister and the mother of two children—that her life was not given up without something being done about it. I'm really pleased to be able to work with that family, and to be able to be here in front of all of us and see that the minister has brought a very comprehensive bill that would allow something to be done and done very quickly.

So I appeal to all my colleagues across the House: Let us do the right thing. Let second reading go as quickly as it can to committee, because everything in this bill is something that is needed for our society. Hopefully, it will come back from committee very quickly, we'll adopt it after third reading and we'll get it into law quite quickly—I'm hoping before we break for the summer recess.

Thank you for the opportunity to add a few points.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly listened with pleasure and with interest this afternoon to the minister speaking for a few moments and sharing his time with the members from Eglinton–Lawrence and Scarborough–Rouge River.

The general thrust here is, the minister was putting across that we're going to come together on this and do something in a non-partisan way. I think that would be a really lovely idea.

I would say, too, that in the acquiescent remarks that were made, the minister did mention the four private members' bills—from Scarborough–Rouge River, Parkdale–High Park, from Garfield Dunlop, as well as Norm Miller—on the bicycle bill and the tow truck operators, all of which are included in here to some extent.

I have a desire to have an hour's leadoff on the bill.

I want to put in perspective too, though, that I do agree on the principle of safety, and we all have a collective responsibility to do the right thing.

I initiated some action, because of a tragedy in my riding, on driver distraction and carried the ball on driver distraction for quite a while. It served a useful purpose—the debate on driver distraction.

I agree today that the fine increase is something that is going to be really important—that the enforcement

people don't use the big clout to get the big cheque. They've got to look at people's driving records and the file when they pull up behind a person. If it's a first offence, perhaps a \$200 or \$300 fine would be fine; or maybe even taking a course on driver distraction, one of those simulator courses, would be a good idea. But if it's a second or third infraction, whack them with \$1,000 and the three points, and their insurance will go up and pretty soon they'll be out of a job.

My sense is that driver distraction is the leading cause. I commend the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his work and the attention he has brought to the issue as well.

I am looking forward to our critic, who has done a lot of work on this file: the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He will make remarks. Hopefully, he'll have the courtesy to share a bit of his time with me, but we'll have to wait and see on that.

Anyway, I think it's a productive afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to stand up in support of Bill 173. I would like to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for making very salient and passionate points, particularly on the distracted driving issue.

For those of you who don't know, I've served with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the PC caucus member on the all-party bike caucus. There have been ongoing issues, in conjunction with the Minister of Transportation, on how we can actually make things better. This should be, ideally, a non-partisan issue.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence talked about getting the bike ready. I do have a Giant bike. That's the name of it. We do ride on the shoulders of Giants—but they do need to be repaired on a regular basis, as mine does.

Certainly, the culture shift around distracted driving and around incorporating and sharing the road—I know that Share the Road has done an amazing job in this Legislature of moving that agenda forward and approaching all parties on an equal basis to ensure that legislation truly is reflective of the real needs of cyclists, of drivers, and that that infrastructure piece is also incorporated into the conversation. The one-metre rule is a really good step in the right direction.

The culture shift is happening because we're talking about it, and if we're talking about it, I really do hope that somebody is listening to it. But through legislation, we can move that agenda forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

1650

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak on this bill today. I can tell you that there are a lot of great points in here—just increasing the maximum fine from \$20 to a set fine that falls in the range of \$60 to \$500 for not using required bicycle lights and other reflectors, reflective material and permitting the use of

flashing red lights as a safety feature on bicycles. I know that they are more than an annoyance on many occasions.

I can tell you that cyclists are busy on streets, and they are, many, many times, just not conscious of traffic about them. I could take one street as an example. On Wellesley Street when we are coming over to Queen's Park, there are a lot of young people going to any number of schools. Many of the young people are going to the University of Toronto here. Many never look, and many never signal.

On Wellesley Street, just east of Queen's Park, I recently had a courier virtually run into the front of my truck from the opposite way, coming across the road. Fortunately, I had the Viper truck, so the front nose automatically goes down on it. The courier just bounced off the truck a little bit. He was most courteous and professional and apologized. I said, "Never mind that; I just want to make sure you're okay," but in fact he had run into me.

It's an ongoing scenario. I know that if Minister Murray had brought forward more information on safe driving, if he ever had a spare moment—and I know he doesn't—that would be something that we'd all love to see when we are in vehicles anywhere in downtown Toronto.

I congratulate the minister on bringing this forth. It's a great job, great legislation, and I'll certainly support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to speak on Bill 173. I thought it was interesting to listen to all the comments. I live in Thornhill, which is definitely still a bedroom community. People are mostly living in Thornhill and travelling to jobs in outlying areas, often downtown.

It's interesting that the Minister of Transportation specifically spoke about the commute and that people should use bicycles for commuting. I don't think there are too many people from Thornhill who commute to downtown Toronto by bicycle. We do need to focus on creating more jobs up in the riding so maybe people could commute to work by bicycle.

I'm disappointed that the Minister of Transportation, after offering to come and tour Thornhill and the transportation issues with me, after contacting his office numerous times, still has not found the time to set a date. What I would like to show him is that people do ride bikes, especially now in the nice weather. They want to take their bikes out, they want to walk. By building bus lanes and widening the roads, we're actually making it less safe. We're building bus lanes, not bike lanes. People would prefer to see bike lanes rather than bus lanes.

I would like to make my offer to the Minister of Transportation. Since he offered to me so generously, I'd like to make the offer now to come up as soon as possible and—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, we're very famous. We've got the famous Centre Street Deli just where they want to build the bus lane, so I'm giving her a shout-out.

We are looking forward to speaking tomorrow on making June bike month, and I'm happy to speak more then about it. We're going to have two events in the riding: May 31 in Woodbridge, which is actually just outside the riding; and in the riding of Thornhill, in Concord, on June 15, we're organizing a ride with a brunch. So I'm looking forward to seeing a lot of residents there, and I invite all the members from all three parties to join us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One of the three members, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, has two minutes.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much.

I want to not only thank the member for Durham for his comments, but I also want to acknowledge his very good work on distracted driving. I apologize for not mentioning it earlier.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo: Again, thank you for your leadership and that of your party and your colleagues and, again, for your commitment on the cycling group in the non-partisan caucus. Excellent work, and thank you for your leadership. I hope we can work together to achieve this.

My friend, my mentor, whom I refer to as Father Joe, the member for Ajax–Pickering, who is a spiritual leader for many of us and helped me learn this place when I sat over where the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is sitting: I want to thank him for his thoughtful comments and his friendship.

To the member for Thornhill: I would love to come to you. My schedule is a little bit busy. So I just want to say to my mother, who's watching: Mom, you see. You're not the only person I forget about. I forgot about my friend from Thornhill, who I owe an apology to.

But I also wanted to show you both the transit and the rapid transit subway investments, because we had a conversation about what was being spent in Thornhill, and I enjoyed that conversation. I miss Schwartz's in Montreal, so maybe we can find some good smoked meat together.

Mr. Mike Colle: Katz's Deli is the best.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Katz's Deli, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence says. We'll have a battle at Caplansky's—which one is better.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very good bill, and the kind of bill that I wish we saw more of. As I've said many times, those of us who have served on municipal governments or school boards are all used to a much less partisan nature. I have to tell you that in my four brief years in this House, I don't think I've met a member who doesn't bring something substantive to this House. I actually hate question period, not because it isn't fun, but because I think we look our most ridiculous. We look so darned stupid. Maybe we can make this a shining example of collaboration and co-operation and just doing a good thing for our community.

I look forward to the continuing conversation, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your patience.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move to the next speaker, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to the following bill:

An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFE), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ASSURER LA SÉCURITÉ DES ROUTES DE L'ONTARIO)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up and add my two cents to Bill 173.

Interjection: You might.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, and I might, if the Legislature is wanting of it, split my time a little bit with the member for Durham, just so you know.

The short title of this bill is Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, and I believe this is a laudable goal and one that we all can agree on. I support many aspects of this bill, but I also have some reservations about some of the others, and I'll outline those concerns as we carry on.

The issue of road safety is vital, as there are over nine million licensed drivers in this province and 11 million registered vehicles, to answer Eglinton–Lawrence's question about how many vehicles there are in the province. It's not just Ontarians who use our vast transportation network. Ontario is home to 14 of Canada's 26 border crossings, with 60% of all Canada-US trade passing through crossings at Windsor, Sarnia and Niagara. Over 32 million cars and 6.7 million trucks use these border crossings on an annual basis. To say that safe roads and reliable infrastructure are an economic imperative is an understatement.

I do have to say that over the past few decades, various measures have been taken to improve the safety of roads. Building on best practices in driver training, road engineering, penalties that serve to deter unsafe driving and enforcement all help to ensure that our roads remain safe. The metric often used to determine road safety is fatalities per 10,000 licensed drivers. It's good to see that since 1995, fatalities per 10,000 licensed drivers have fallen from around 1.4 to 0.63 in 2010.

While these statistics are encouraging, I find there's an interesting disconnect between ministry statistics and

what the public sees. A survey conducted by the CAA asked its membership to give their impression of Ontario's roads today compared with five years ago. Only 12% of respondents said the roads were safer than they were five years ago. About 35% said the roads were the same, and nearly 50% of people said that Ontario's roads were actually less safe than five years ago.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is: Why is there such a disconnect between the two? I really think the answer is quite simple. Certainly, improvements have been made in road safety in the past two decades to this point, and Bill 173 does address some issues. But Ontario drivers are looking at the lack of a plan this government has when it comes to breaking up gridlock and investing in our road infrastructure, which is crumbling. I think that most people look at our roads today and have concluded that if we continue with the status quo of de-prioritizing key infrastructure upgrades, we can very well expect to see our road safety statistics get worse in the future.

So when we see the results of the CAA questionnaire, I think the message is clear. While fatalities may be down in the last couple of years, the current state of our roads is actually more dangerous than they were five years ago. People understand that the government's misplaced spending priorities are putting the safety of our entire road network at risk. The PC Party does have a credible plan to prioritize key infrastructure investments by establishing a dedicated fund to ensure infrastructure investment does not get pre-empted.

1700
Speaker, I'd like to go through Bill 173 and highlight some of the good parts and where we have concerns that we'd like to see addressed. I'll start off with the cycling and pedestrian part, and the parts of the bill that I'll start off with do have quite a bit of common sense to them. When it comes to pedestrian safety, I think this bill seeks to strike a good balance. While most of what it legislates, like stopping at crosswalks and having drivers wait until a pedestrian clears the crosswalk before driving forward, are already observed by most drivers, legislating it adds a degree of certainty and legal responsibility.

What I also like about this bill is that it puts the responsibility for pedestrian safety equally on the driver and the pedestrian. For instance, the pedestrian must not enter a crosswalk if a car does not have enough time, or is travelling too fast a speed, to stop. I think it's important that we recognize that all road users are responsible for safety, and I believe this aspect of the bill helps achieve that.

This bill also addresses issues that pertain to the safety of cyclists. There are roughly 1.2 million Ontarians that ride daily through the spring, summer and fall seasons; 36% of Ontarians or 4.5 million people ride monthly; and, in 2010, roughly two million visitors cycled while travelling in Ontario. It's important that we have a road network and a legislative framework that protects the safety of cyclists.

I was glad to see that the Liberal government has included a clause that incorporates the private member's

bill introduced by my colleague from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka that permits cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of our highways. I know that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka brought his bill forward to ensure that cyclists everywhere in this province have the ability to ride their bike safely, so I'm pleased to see that in this bill.

Most other aspects of the bill that pertain to cyclists are fairly common practice. However, there is one aspect I'd like to address, and that's the issue of dooring. Dooring, as many of us know, is when a driver accidentally opens their door into the path of an oncoming bicycle. Certainly, this problem is most severe in Toronto and the GTA. This bill proposes increasing the fines from \$50 to a range of \$300 to \$1,000 for drivers found guilty of dooring. The government says this will deter instances of dooring.

While I'm in support of drivers being responsible and aware of their surroundings when getting out of their car, I'm not sure that the deterrence argument holds much weight in this instance. Most instances of dooring, in which a driver is negligent, do end up in court. We all have a legal obligation to reasonably avoid negligent behaviour that could cause injury to others, even with Bill 173. Because of this, the damages awarded in the negligence suit, I think, far outweigh an increase of fines in terms of deterrence. I think if you're talking about this in terms of deterring dooring, the legal process already provides a fairly significant deterrent.

I also think we need to consider the responsibility of both parties, much like Bill 173 does, when it comes to pedestrians. Cyclists must be aware of vehicle blind spots and do what they can to make themselves visible to drivers, particularly at night. As I said before, road safety is the responsibility of all road users.

I'd like to move on to emergency vehicles and tow trucks, and what this bill comes forward with. When I do drive down Highway 401, oftentimes I see a motorist receiving roadside assistance from a tow truck. Getting a vehicle hooked up to a tow truck can be a hazardous proposition, particularly when dozens of cars are speeding by, usually at 120 kilometres an hour.

This danger was unfortunately brought home in an all-too-real way when a tow truck driver from Windsor was killed two years ago while helping to change a tire. According to police reports, the tow truck driver was where he should have been. In addition to this incident, there have been many near-death occurrences and injuries of workers and motorists who are stopped due to mechanical failure, damage or accidents on Ontario's highways and roads.

The aptly named "slow down, move over" aspect of the bill is important. In fact, I'm proud to say that my colleague the member from Simcoe North was ahead of this issue and introduced a bill in March 2012 to address it. The MPP from Simcoe North recognized a danger and put forth a "slow down, move over" bill. It required, by legislation, that drivers slow down and provide distance between their vehicle and any tow truck or other vehicle

stopped at the side of the road. This protection already exists for emergency vehicles and my colleague's private member's bill would have extended the protection to roadside assistance vehicles. The bill received broad-based support with a petition submitted to the Legislature on October 15, 2012, that had nearly 7,500 signatures.

But, Speaker, I imagine you do remember what happened in October 2012—you're not answering, but that's okay: Dalton McGuinty prorogued Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and all the legislation before the House was wiped clean, including the "slow down, move over" legislation.

Finally, two years from when the member from Simcoe North first introduced it, we see the "slow down, move over" legislation reappear in this government's bill, and I commend the government for doing so. With a government bill, there's more of a chance it will become law, and the sooner we can start preventing needless deaths and injuries, the better, because the overarching concern is making sure there's good legislation in place to protect Ontarians.

I'm pleased to see that the Liberal government is borrowing ideas from members like the member from Simcoe North. It's too bad, though, they haven't more seriously considered stealing some of our other ideas. For instance, the member from Simcoe North does a tremendous job in raising awareness of the job-killing College of Trades and the associated trades tax. Considering there are 600 million people without a job in this province, this Liberal government should listen to this man, who actually spent the bulk of his career—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest the member stick to the script. He's drifting.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Fair enough. Stay on the road; stay straight. Right. I'm sorry, Speaker. It's nice to see the Liberal government take Simcoe North's piece of legislation and incorporate it into Bill 173. It's too bad they didn't pick up on the others. But I'll move on. Thank you very much.

I'd like to talk a bit about distracted driving, because there has been quite a bit of commentary over the last few months. There has been great discussion about it through what the government should be doing to deter the practice, and there's good reason for this. It has only been in the last decade that mobile devices have become a fixture in our lives. Back when I started managing the family pharmacy in the mid-1990s, nobody really had an idea of what a cellphone was. There were many computers in the office, but cellphones were pretty much unheard of. But in that short period of time, the computing power of those old PCs has been condensed down into a hand-held device.

For something that didn't really exist 15 years ago, pretty much everyone has one now. I'm sure I can speak for everyone in this room when I say that not only do I carry my cellphone with me at all times, I feel lost when I don't have it with me. Meetings, schedules, emails, text messages: Every way that I communicate and stay productive can be found on my phone. The temptation to

check my phone when I'm behind the wheel, of course, is immense. However, doing so is one of the most dangerous things you can do when you're behind the wheel.

Quite frankly, the statistics are overwhelming. If I may, I'd like to go through some of these statistics to better illustrate distracted driving and its dangers.

The Ontario Provincial Police cite distracted driving as a causal factor in 30% to 50% of traffic collisions in Ontario. And this is just what is reported; many say that the figure is probably much, much higher. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 80% of collisions and 65% of near-crashes have some form of driver inattention as a contributing factor. I think it's clear to everyone that cellphones certainly lead to inattention when it comes to the task of driving.

Cellphones are one of the most common distractions for drivers. Drivers who engage in text messaging on cellular phones are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or near-crash event compared to non-distracted drivers. This statistic comes to us from a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, and it's not hard to understand why. The CAA has noted that the average time it takes to respond to a text messages is 33.6 seconds. If we assume you're travelling on the highway at 100 kilometres an hour, this equates to travelling a distance of 933 metres without your attention on the road. That's almost 10 football fields. Even if you're just answering a phone call, that takes about 10.6 seconds. Again, assuming you're travelling on the highway at 100 kilometres an hour, which I'm sure we all do on the 400 series, it equates to travelling a distance of 294 metres, or approximately three football fields, without attention on the road.

As much as this is a road safety issue, there are economic consequences to distracted driving. The government of Canada has estimated that the economic losses caused by a traffic collision related to health care costs and lost productivity are at least \$10 billion annually, which is about 1% of Canada's GDP. With distracted driving increasing the probability of experiencing a traffic collision by 230%, it's very apparent that unchecked distracted driving has a negative economic impact. I find these statistics quite incredible.

These statistics and the anecdotal evidence that we get when we hear numerous news stories about car accidents caused by mobile device usage have shifted the public's focus in terms of road safety issues.

1710

It used to be that drinking while driving was the number one road safety issue, but thanks to the efforts of organizations like MADD and our law enforcement agencies, we've been able to curb the number of fatalities due to drunk driving. Now, in two national public opinion polls, Canadians consider texting and driving to be the number one road safety issue. Yet despite the horrifying statistics and broad public awareness, we still find it difficult to just put our phones away when we're behind the wheel.

The percentage of Canadians who admit to using a cellphone while driving has remained between 36% and

37% in the past two years. Considering the fact that this figure was only at 25% in 2002, it's not difficult to see that we're heading in the wrong direction. But as illustrative as these statistics are, it's not enough to throw statistics at people and hope it sinks in. We need to have a conversation among our communities and make efforts to change the collective cultural attitude towards distracted driving.

I mentioned drinking and driving a minute ago. I think the evolution of that road safety issue highlights some interesting and relevant points. After all, just a couple of generations ago, drinking and driving was commonplace. There was cultural acceptance surrounding the practice. However, we know that alcohol impairs judgment and increases the risk of accidents.

At the time that legislation to deter the practice was enacted, a number of groups like MADD sprang up to educate people on the dangers of drinking and driving. Today when I ask my local police officers how many young drivers get pulled over for drinking and driving, they tell me it's very low. The people getting charged with drinking and driving tend to be older, over 50: those who learned to drink and drive when drinking and driving was acceptable. Yet our young people, as a general group, are aware of the dangers and make smart decisions when it comes to drinking and driving.

This is what we must do: We must change the cultural attitude towards texting and driving. I'm sure that was the aim of Chief Justice Bonkalo—I hope I got her name right—when she ruled to increase the fine for using a hand-held device behind the wheel from \$155 to \$280 on March 18. The Chief Justice understood that \$155 was not a sufficient deterrent for a practice that had become so deeply embedded in many drivers' behaviour, so she did what she could do to help deter a habit that claimed 78 lives in Ontario last year. I commend her move. I think she made the decision despite promises from the minister, which the MTO and the minister both have been slow to act on.

All of last year, we heard how the minister was going to tackle the issue of distracted driving. However, nothing was brought forward. The good news is that his colleague the member from Scarborough–Rouge River did. Bill 116 was brought forward in response to the tragic death of a constituent in the member opposite's riding. So he did what any good member in this House would do: He tabled a bill that would help prevent more senseless deaths.

Not only would Bill 116 have increased the fines for distracted driving offences substantially; it also proposes implementing demerit points. I have to commend the member for this inclusion because, when we talk about distracted driving, demerit points need to be part of the conversation. When demerit points are issued, they appear in a driver's record. If you get more than nine demerit points, you can lose your licence. It's that basic. When we talk about where to start in order to change the attitude towards distracted driving and take steps to deter it, I can't think of a better deterrent than the prospect of losing one's licence.

Another deterring factor when it comes to demerit points is the potential effect they have on someone's insurance rates. Demerit points show up on driver abstracts that get sent to insurance companies. If you have accumulated a number of points, you could very well see your insurance rate spike. When we think about it, when somebody realizes that they could be paying hundreds of dollars more a year on insurance if they get caught texting and driving, they'll think twice about checking their phone while behind the wheel. The previous fine of \$155 has, until now, been considered a cost of driving. Demerit points, on the other hand, carry real weight.

So I was proud to reach across to my colleague across the chamber to help him support his efforts to pass his bill. In fact, we co-hosted a press conference in the media studio to talk about the merits of his bill. When the bill came up for second reading, I gladly stood up in support and voted for it. It's a great moment when MPPs can come together regardless of their party affiliation to try to do the right thing for the people of Ontario. I know that the member from Scarborough–Rouge River agrees with me. As he's a member of the committee reviewing my private member's bill to protect children with asthma while they're at school, I know that he will work hard to press his caucus to support my bill.

We passed Bill 116 through second reading last November. However, when we returned from our winter break, it seemed that the powers that be on the government side had forgotten a great deal about their own caucus member's bill that he put forward. The Minister of Transportation never talked about it, and it never did come up in committee. It wasn't really until the Chief Justice raised the fines for using a mobile device while behind the wheel that the conversation around distracted driving restarted. Everyone started to remember that the Minister of Transportation had made promises to tackle the issue of distracted driving and that, so far, he had failed to deliver.

It was last November that the minister had told the Toronto Star, "We are going to be moving in the very near future." He said this in reference to distracted driving, a problem he said could be solved by a combination of an intense education campaign and the addition of demerit points. Remember, this was November of last year. But only after the Chief Justice raised the fines and reignited the conversation on distracted driving did we get the introduction of Bill 173.

When the bill was introduced, it received widespread media coverage. I want to read you a bit from the Toronto Star again, an article that discussed the introduction of Bill 173. This is dated March 17, 2014, and it reads as follows: "Distracted drivers on their cellphones and careless motorists who knock down cyclists with their open doors will face maximum fines of \$1,000 and three demerit points under sweeping new road safety rules introduced Monday."

CTV News in Ottawa reported as follows: "And texting while driving or 'dooring' a cyclist could cost you demerit points."

The Globe and Mail reported, "Ontario is proposing a potentially costly hike in penalties for distracted drivers by imposing three demerit points in addition to a maximum fine of up to \$1,000.

"Drivers who receive demerit points after being convicted of using their cellphones behind the wheel could face higher insurance premiums."

The media, by and large, focused on the introduction of demerit points as an important aspect of Bill 173. There's no reason they shouldn't have, given that MTO's own backgrounder on the bill reads as follows:

"To reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities as a result of distracted driving, proposed amendments include:

—increasing the fine from \$60 to \$500 to \$300 to \$1,000;

—assigning three demerit points upon conviction of a distracted driving offence;

—making a distracted driving conviction a contravention of one of the licence conditions placed on novice drivers within the graduated licensing system."

The reason I bring this up is that I have read Bill 173, and there's absolutely no mention of demerit points in it. I've spoken to a number of stakeholders to see if they picked up on something that I had missed. However, none of them could find the phrase "demerit points" in there either.

This brings to mind two questions: First, will demerit points be implemented with the passage of Bill 173? Second, when will drivers start receiving demerit points for distracted driving offences? The answer to the first is, "No," and the answer to the second is, "Whenever the minister wants." That's because demerit points for offences related to the use of mobile devices when behind the wheel can be instituted through an order in council. It's not a matter of legislation; it's a matter of regulation.

After I had stood in support of the member from Scarborough—Rouge River's private member's bill, people started to ask me when this important change would be made. When it became clear the minister was dragging his heels, I asked the legislative library to provide me with a report that outlined whether demerit points could be instituted without legislative amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. I'd like to read a bit from the report so that everyone can fully understand the issue.

"The Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2009"—and I'm quoting here—"made amendments to the Highway Traffic Act which were proclaimed in force on October 26, 2009. The 2009 act amended the Highway Traffic Act to generally prohibit driving:

"—if the display screen of a television, computer or other device in the motor vehicle is visible to the driver, and

"—while holding or using a hand-held wireless device or hand-held electronic entertainment device or other prescribed devices."

In other words, distracted driving is considered an offence under sections 78 and 78.1 of the Highway Traffic Act.

In talking about the role of demerit points in the system, the report goes on to say, "The Highway Traffic Act authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations providing for a demerit points system for drivers of motor vehicles or street cars.

"The demerit point system may provide for the cancellation and suspension of licences and may require that a driver show cause why his or her licence should not be suspended.

"Ontario regulation 339/94 made under the Highway Traffic Act provides that if a person is convicted of an offence under the provision set out in column 1 of the table to the regulation (and the penalty imposed by the court for the conviction does not include a period of licence suspension) the registrar shall record in respect of the person the number of demerit points set out opposite thereto in column 2.

"The table at the end of the regulation lists various offences under the Highway Traffic Act and sets out the number of demerit points for each one."

So here we begin to see that regulation 339/94 sets out offences in the Highway Traffic Act on which demerit points can be applied, as well as the corresponding number of points.

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When I read this, it would appear that so long as something is an offence as defined by the Highway Traffic Act, it could be included in the regulation that outlines demerit points. So, to me, given that using a mobile device is a Highway Traffic Act offence, all the minister needs to do is simply amend the regulation to allow the inclusion of distracted driving offences.

The report confirms this notion, as it reads: "Under the existing legislative framework, in order for demerit points to apply upon conviction for an offence for violation of the distracted driving provision, Ontario regulation 339/94 (Demerit Point System) would have to be amended.

"Under the Legislation Act, 2006, the power to make regulations includes the power to amend, revoke or replace them from time to time.

"Since the Highway Traffic Act requires that regulations providing for demerit point systems must be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, an amendment to Ontario regulation 339/94 would also be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

There you have it. The reason that demerit points are not included in Bill 173 is that legislation isn't even required to implement them.

I'm not saying that the minister intentionally misled the press and therefore misled the people of Ontario—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: You can't say that.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: —however, he certainly wasn't eager to correct the press when—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Leone): I'm going to have to ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'll withdraw.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We'll accept you, Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker, the minister wasn't eager to correct the press when they asserted that Bill 173 would implement demerit points on distracted drivers. So we have to ask ourselves: Why wouldn't he make the clarification? Perhaps one explanation has to do with a statistic I cited earlier. I previously mentioned that 78 people were killed in distracted-driving-related incidents last year. If we take a monthly average, that equates to 6.5 people a month. Therefore, from the time the minister made mention of demerit points last November, it has been six months that we've not seen any action. Through those six months, too many people possibly may have been killed since the minister failed to extend the demerit point system last November.

Maybe the minister didn't want to correct the press because knowing that the minister could have implemented demerit points for distracted driving offences at any time since he became minister, yet chose not to, would make it look like he doesn't care, and the optics and the politics behind it would not do well at keeping his job and position or at making Ontario safe.

It's really a shame, but we've seen this so often from this Liberal government. Their own member, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, wanted to do the right thing, and both parties sitting on this side of the House wanted to do the right thing. The issue of distracted driving is truly a non-partisan issue, and we've all been prepared, on this side of the House, to make sure the necessary changes are made to protect all drivers on our roads.

Despite our commitment to this issue and our passion to see it become a reality, we, as opposition MPPs, only have so many options at our disposal to achieve that. Yet the one person in this chamber who actually has the authority to go forward with this initiative has stalled, in order to allow the implementation of demerit points to coincide with Bill 173. All I have to say is that the timing of Bill 173 is interesting.

We have the budget-leaking team's rollout playbook, and I can say that we expect a budget quite possibly on May 1. The government so far has been able to keep their sinking ship because of being propped up by the NDP. This year, the tone between the two has been more acrimonious, so this is what I have to say to my NDP friends—

Ms. Catherine Fife: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Leone): Point of order, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that the member should speak to the bill that's before us. I think that the Speaker ruled in the right way the last time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Leone): I ask the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London to direct his comments to the bill.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I was just getting to that, Speaker, if you would allow me to finish my last sentence here.

To the NDP, I'm just saying: Don't let the government hold this bill over your head to ensure passage of this bill

to increase our savings. I know you're concerned that if you come to your senses and refuse to support this unaccountable government anymore, you may be perceived as the reason that some of these road safety measures will no longer become law.

But I'll tell you, as I've been telling everybody watching at home, that this minister does not need the legislation to institute demerit points. While I can't speak to his motives, I consider it a disgrace to his office if he was erroneously saying that Bill 173 is needed to implement demerit points and he uses this important road safety issue as leverage to gain support of what I can only assume is another tax-and-spend budget.

Whether the budget passes or fails, there's absolutely no reason why demerit points shouldn't be instituted for distracted driving offences. It's time we implement demerit points, deter the habit and begin to change the cultural attitude towards cellphone usage while driving.

I'd like to move into vehicle inspection centres now. Another aspect of Bill 173 that I want to address is the vehicle inspection centres. If you will allow me, I want to read a section of the bill overview that discusses vehicle inspection centres, and it reads as follows:

"Current sections 88 to 100 of the act, which deal with motor vehicle inspection stations and related matters, are repealed. They are replaced with sections 100.2 to 100.8, which create a new vehicle inspection centre system. Section 100.1 allows the Minister of Transportation to make transition regulations to facilitate the implementation of the vehicle inspection centre system.

"Under new section 100.2, the minister may establish a program for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection and may appoint a director of vehicle inspection standards to administer the program. The minister may enter into agreements with service providers to assist in operating the program. The minister may also enter into agreements to authorize persons to operate vehicle inspection centres and to authorize service providers to enter into such agreements.

"The director of vehicle inspection standards is given broad authority to issue directives governing certificates, inspection procedures and requirements and equipment and performance standards under section 100.7. It is a deemed term and condition of every agreement to operate a vehicle inspection centre to comply with all applicable directives."

That's quite a vision in Bill 173, I must say, Mr. Speaker. The issue of vehicle inspection is important. I take my own truck in regularly to ensure that it's in good working order, to ensure that I'm safe on the road and I'm getting the best performance out of my vehicle. However, not everyone is able to get their vehicle to the mechanic as often as they should. Everyone leads a busy life, and even though I try my best to get to my mechanic all the time, I know there have been a couple of times when I've driven more miles than I should have without an oil change.

It's estimated that 40% of recommended light vehicle maintenance and repair is postponed or abandoned

altogether in Canada each year. Some estimates put the nationwide value of unperformed maintenance work at about \$14 billion. This does pose a certain road safety concern, because none of us wants to be driving down the 401 and see the car in front of us lose a tire or malfunction in another way that could endanger other drivers.

But, like many things, this government just doesn't seem to have much of an imagination. Every time there is a problem, they take it upon themselves to build another bureaucracy. Instead of encouraging and incentivizing people to get their vehicles inspected, this government wants to make them do so. The paternalistic ways of Dalton McGuinty certainly did not leave with him.

When I see the term "director of vehicle inspection," I read "inspection czar"; when I see "program for the inspection of vehicles," I read "mandatory compliance"; and when I see "the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection," I read "more cost to the Ontario taxpayers."

Why don't we ask the thousands of tradespeople across the province who now have to abide by the College of Trades that's charging crippling membership fees so that they can—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears the member didn't listen to me last time. He's drifting to the College of Trades. I'm not sure what that's got to do with this bill, so we'll get back to it, won't we?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm getting back to it, Speaker, that basically, the people of Ontario are hard-working and overtaxed in this province, and the government is asking for more. That's my fear when it comes to the inspection program and the czar who will run it. For the most part, the structure and framework of this new vehicle inspection is left to the regulations.

What this legislation does is allow for the establishment of such a program but provide no checks or balances on what it will look like. Will this be a yearly mandatory inspection? What will drivers be forced to pay for this regular inspection? How extensive will the inspections be? Will the system apply to transport trucks, personal vehicles or both? Will fly-by-night auto shops use the system to charge me for labour and parts that I don't need?

The problem here is that the minister or, rather, his chosen inspection czar has *carte blanche*. The irony is I think a system whereby we acknowledge vehicle inspections is not a bad thing; however, I envision something that would not force people to spend money on a yearly basis. I envision something that would, instead, encourage people without the "mommy" government stepping in to tell people to do it, because if we think outside the box for a minute, it occurs to me that there is an opportunity to engage another stakeholder group that this government has also felt the need to oversee and manage, and that's the auto insurers.

Insurers want to lower risk in the their books because it means there is a lower likelihood they will have to pay out claims. People getting regular inspections and main-

tenance on their vehicles lower the risk that those people will get into an accident. For the same reason that I mentioned insurance premiums when talking about the deterrent effects of demerit points, I now mention insurance premiums to demonstrate the possible incentives of getting a regular vehicle inspection.

Some Ontario insurers do offer discounts for regular upkeep on one's vehicles. However, the discount offered in Ontario is far below, say, that of Illinois, where the regulatory burden is significantly smaller. I think this has something to do with the requirements imposed to offer discounts.

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Insurers have to submit massive rate filings that include their intentions with respect to discounts. In order to change discount amounts on policies, they again have to file with the regulatory agency. I'm going to read the regulatory requirement that deals with insurance discounts. It's outlined under section 5 of the rate filing application and reads as follows:

"If the insurer is requesting changes in the amount or value of a discount (except a group discount which is to be disclosed in section 4.n) or surcharge, or is introducing a new discount (except a group discount which is to be disclosed in section 4.n) or surcharge, the approach used in costing and a general narrative of the process must be outlined in detail.

"The derivation of the discount or surcharge should make use of the insurer's own data. The justification for the discount may be due to lower expenses due to lower acquisition costs or lower administrative costs or lower loss costs. The filing should clearly indicate the basis for the discount or surcharge. The insurer must have appropriate information to support the discount or surcharge. Should the insurer find it necessary to rely on outside data or a different source of company data, the filing must identify the source of the data and provide an explanation of its applicability in the instant circumstance. All data used in the process of developing the discount or surcharge must be exhibited and labelled.

"A comparison of current, indicated and proposed discounts or surcharges must be provided for each coverage for which discounts or surcharges are changing. Included in this should be the written premium distribution and the exposure distribution for the discounts or surcharges.

"A current and a proposed distribution of the insurer's book of business that is affected by the discount or surcharge change must be provided to determine the average premium change (shift). All assumptions and detailed calculations must be provided to support the rate level change."

So, Speaker, as clear as mud, this outlines all the data that needs to be collected, justifications that need to be made and formatting requirements for the application submission in order to offer a driver a discount on their auto insurance. As an outsider looking in, I'm left asking the question, why can't a business simply offer a discount to its customers that get their vehicles regularly maintained?

The solution for me would be to allow insurers more easily to offer discounts to their customers wanting to keep their risk low. Knowing that regular maintenance helps increase road safety, it's only natural to offer discounts to clients that keep their vehicles well maintained. Drivers in turn have an incentive to go to see their mechanic on a regular basis because they will see the return on that investment through a reduction in their premiums. That's the system we should be striving toward.

The other issue I do have here is the lack of clarity around the continuation of the Drive Clean program. Drivers are already forced to come in and get their vehicles inspected as part of that program. Throughout the life of the Drive Clean program, the government has reaped over \$30 million in revenues but has only spent \$19 million on it; it's basically just another tax grab. So I have to ask the minister, will drivers be expected to pay for an inspection administered under the existing Drive Clean program as well as an inspection administered under this new inspection czar? How much money will this government then plan to collect? Does government have any intention of scrapping Drive Clean to make way for this new inspection system, or does it intend to collect revenues from both indefinitely?

That might be just the sticking—
Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are a couple of ministers who are really having a great talk, but they might want to take it outside. The one minister is not even in his seat. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The Minister of Natural Resources is here. I'd love for him to review my statement on youth hunting I did today. Hopefully, we can solve that problem there of getting the youth hunters their tags.

Anyhow, back to my talk, Mr. Speaker. The sticking point: The government has absolutely no hope of balancing its budget by 2016, particularly not with the \$5 billion in additional spending they plan to announce in the weeks leading up to this next budget. While I can't speak to the motive, perhaps bringing in another program that makes money off the backs of hard-working Ontarians is the goal.

You know what? I have a better idea the Liberals can use to help balance this budget, and that is, stop spending. Every year, government spending goes up from time to time, and we can't afford it. The Wynne government has continued with the McGuinty legacy of buying votes with taxpayer money. As a result, the government has become bloated. Now the government wants to go back to the people of Ontario and force them to fork over more of their hard-earned dollars on another vehicle inspection program. If we get this bill to committee, we're going to seriously have to look at the structure of this section.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move on to medical reports. Along the lines of poorly defined aspects of this bill, I want to briefly touch on the issue of medical reporting. In the bill explanation, it reads:

"Sections 203 and 204 of the act currently require doctors and optometrists to report to the registrar of

motor vehicles the name, address and clinical condition of every person 16 years old or older who, in the opinion of the doctor or optometrist, suffers from a condition that may make it dangerous for the person to drive.

"Sections 203 and 204 are re-enacted. Rather than imposing obligations on doctors and optometrists, the re-enacted provisions apply to persons to be prescribed by regulation. The prescribed persons will be required to make a mandatory report if a person has or appears to have a medical condition, functional impairment or visual impairment identified in a prescribed publication. In addition, a prescribed person may make a discretionary report if a person has a medical condition, functional impairment or visual impairment that the prescribed person believes may make it dangerous for the person to drive."

Now, we've had medical reporting for a long time. It's necessary that people, due to certain medical conditions, are ensured that they're fit to drive and that they're evaluated. It's necessary for keeping our roads safe. These new changes may be good. They may enhance the system of medical reporting, but again, the devil is in the details. The legislation basically gives the minister broad-sweeping powers to determine what medical professionals will be able to report to the registrar of motor vehicles patients they feel pose a risk to road safety. I think we all agree that physicians and optometrists having this ability makes sense.

But how will the minister determine what other medical professionals will be granted this ability? Guidelines for outlining which professions get to make this call and on what basis they can make that call do not exist here. The minister is basically saying, "Just give me the authority to do this, and I'll get it right." Well, I have to say to the minister, this government has been dead wrong on so many things that I quite frankly don't think he has the ability to get this right.

I have constituents who come into my office regularly who have had their licences suspended for medical reasons. Some of them have had their licences rightfully revoked while others have not. Either way, the process of dealing with a doctor and then the MTO can be burdensome, and those who have their licence reinstated spend at least a couple of weeks, even months, without the ability to drive.

Again, I hope that when we're able to get this bill to committee for deliberations, we'll be able to examine this in more detail, because I think, if done properly, there is potential to increase the safety of our roads here. However, if done improperly, there will be a lot of drivers being denied their independence based on the whim of a medical professional who has no business making such an assessment.

Mr. Speaker, I've gone over this bill. I've given you point-by-point discussions on where we're going. There are a lot of good points in this bill. As I've said before, he has taken a lot of private members' bills and incorporated them into his omnibus bill. However, there are certain areas which they didn't borrow from other members, and

it's quite vague. The vagueness of this bill is something that we really need to hear more from this government on as they deliberate over the next week or so on this bill before it goes to committee, and during committee we need to fill in the holes, the questions I've raised here, particularly with the vehicle inspection centres. How can we expect Ontarians to afford another bureaucracy, let alone having to get their vehicle inspected year by year if it's not spelled out—we don't know if it's even for cars; it could be just for transport trucks, which is a whole different ball of wax and conversation to have. How will those inspections be carried out with visiting traffic?

Mr. Speaker, I do think we need to carry forward with more debate on this bill. We'd love to hear what the NDP have to say on this bill, and we have to wait and see what the government, more so than the rest of our members, has to say. But getting this bill to committee is very, very important.

I do have to commend the member from Scarborough—Rouge River and the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, who spoke earlier, talking about working together to get this bill—good bills—passed so we have safety for the people of this province. They were both in committee yesterday talking about Ryan's Law and how, coming together, they have an excellent bill to save the lives of people with asthma throughout our school system. However, with some of the questions that were asked yesterday, I'm kind of cautiously thinking that maybe the government wants to postpone this bill. So I'm reaching out to them to rethink what the bureaucracy has told them about stalling this bill. Let's get this bill passed. Let's bring it back for third reading.

1740

The member from Eglinton—Lawrence talked about his bill that took five years. I don't want to wait five years. I like waiting one year. Maybe we can work together and achieve a milestone to get this bill passed in one year instead of five. We all know it's coming. Bill 135, Ryan's Law, will eventually become law. Let's do it sooner rather than later. We're all on the same page.

Back to Bill 173, if you'll let me have a little leeway with that: I kind of think—can I have a little leeway with the College of Trades? There are a few more things I've got to talk about on that. No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Talk about the 1-to-1 ratio.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The 1-to-1 ratio of car drivers in the HOV lanes, maybe? No.

Anyway, we've done quite a bit on this.

I do have to say that there is a reception here tonight with MADD Canada, and I think we should all have time to go and visit that.

Taking care of impaired driving, I would like to have a conversation with the minister. He does make mention of the ignition-interlock device program, which I think is a great idea. However, there is a concern with getting the device installed and keeping it maintained. A lot of the service stations or the corporations or businesses that offer this service are few and far between in rural Ontario. We want these people to have operating devices

in their cars, because they did a bad thing; they drank and they drove. They need to earn the right to drive again, and they need to have proper operating interlock devices. I call out to all members of this party, particularly in rural Ontario: Take a look at which service stations are administering the interlock program and see if you can talk to people about it, because there are a lot of people on the interlock system device who are trying to get their lives back together and go to work, but because of the way the system is set up, they're failing in getting this device operating properly and getting it maintained. I think that the government needs to look at that program to ensure that there are enough people providing this service for people, with the interlock program.

I commend the government for expanding our laws on impaired driving. It's a tough topic. It affects quite a few people in this province. You could talk to five people in this room and I'm sure they all know somebody who has been affected by a drunk driver. So putting a stop to drinking and driving, making it as stringent as possible, is a great step.

We need to do that with distracted driving. Just as you can talk to someone today, that family member or loved one of someone who was hurt or killed in a drunk driving accident, give it time and you'll have the same statistics here for distracted driving.

I talk to the pages here: You're not legally driving yet, but you probably all have cellphones and iPods and such, and you're probably getting used to always having them in your hand and playing with them. Now is the time to break away from that habit so you don't always have that need, so when you start driving you're not really tempted to start pulling out that iPhone and talking. Your friends can wait to hear from you. Your parents can wait till you pull over and call them. Try to think about that now. You're in grade 7 or 8. What are you, 12, 13, 14? You're only a few years away from driving, and I want you to be safe. This bill is going to help ensure that you don't do it. The last thing you want to do is get a demerit point and then have your parents call you up and ask, "What's this fine doing here, and why did your insurance rates just triple?" Then you'd be in a lot of trouble.

So I think this is a great idea, demerit points. However, as I noted before, we don't need this bill to get demerit points. As I said before, the minister can do an order in council and create the demerit points. It could have been done last November. It's not even in the bill. I'd love for someone else to read the bill, because I've read it numerous times, I've had my staff read it numerous times, and it doesn't say "demerit points"—only in the public relations campaign by the ministry that says they're going to add it. So we can only hope, we can only trust, that when they develop the regulations to this bill, there will be demerit points added in. Again, I'd love to have that discussion at committee time because I can only speak for an hour today.

I know the member from Durham wanted to have a little speaking time. I don't think there's justification, Mr. Speaker, to only give him 10 minutes to talk in this

House. I don't think it's the right thing to do for the Legislature to have the minister—he should be a minister—the member for Durham come out and have that 10-minute discussion. He needs more time. I'm going to try to wrap up and take my full hour just so the member for Durham, in fact, does get his full 20 minutes when it comes to debate, because he has a lot to offer and contribute to this Legislature. We have to mention that he is retiring in another month or so, so we do want to give him his extra time when we go to election.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No, he needs his time; he still has lots to say. We're going to look forward to the member for Durham talking about this bill later on, because he has been writing notes the whole time.

On cycling safety, I think we need to ensure that we continue to have our people on their bikes safe throughout the streets. I go back to my own city. I live in rural Ontario: St. Thomas, Ontario; population 37,000 people. It's pretty tough to ride your bike in that city. It wasn't designed for bike riding. There are no bike lanes. There's parking all over the place, and it's quite fearful.

I let my daughter ride her bike uptown with my wife and I to go get an ice cream or a milkshake at McDonald's or Tim Hortons, and you're fearful because it's not conducive to riding bikes. Hopefully, with the cycling groups throughout the province that are promoting safer bike routes, this bill will help ensure that everyone is safe.

Taking on Norm Miller's bill—Parry Sound—Muskoka—to pave the shoulders certainly will enhance safety when you get outside of the cities and are riding between—well, in my city, from St. Thomas to Port Stanley. Have you ever gone to Mackie's? Has anybody heard of Mackie's? Steve Peters probably talked about Mackie's, with their french fries and their orangeade—really, really great. Or in fact, if you bike-ride from St. Thomas to Port Burwell—Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have a great submarine there that I've invited every member of this House to come to visit, and I hope they do so.

Mr. Rob Leone: Great fishing there.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Great fishing there.

Again, we could ride our bikes there. Once these shoulders are paved, it would be a lot safer for us. But at this point, I would recommend we take a car.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the intention of this bill. We need to debate it, because as I said, there are quite a few empty spaces that need to be filled in. I think the people of Ontario deserve to know where they're going with these vehicle inspection stations; where these new vehicles are; how much power this person is going to have. Is he going to affect everyday cars or is he going to have to go after the trucking industry? What exactly is going on?

We all want better road safety. We want to ensure our vehicles are safe. We don't want parts of trucks coming off and we don't want parts of cars falling off, but we sure don't want to be over-regulated in this place. We

don't want it to be overpriced and have to do too many inspections. We don't want to see what happened to the Drive Clean program, where now it's just a bank machine for the government to continue bringing in money to their coffers. We know they're stretched on their dollar. They can't balance a budget, and they're looking for other ways to bring in the money.

We want to ensure that this new drug czar—drug czar; we already have a drug czar—this transportation czar—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My other job—this vehicle inspection czar is there for a purpose and not really to generate more funds for this government.

Just as a quick wrap-up, I'm glad this bill has come forward. I hope we get to debate it for the next week or so before we vote on it for second reading and get it into committee. I look forward to talking more about this bill. I would like to hear each one respond—I guess we each have two minutes—and we'll go from there.

I do have to mention, though, two things that weren't mentioned. Mike Harris, Kitchener-Conestoga—no talk of roundabouts. He's very concerned about roundabouts and he thought something would have been brought forward in a big, omnibus transportation bill. There's no talk about roundabouts and I think we need to have that discussion. And I think maybe we need to have a discussion about electric bikes on the road, how we're going to deal with those going forward. I've talked to many police officers in my riding and there's quite a bit of concern with the legalities of safety and such on the road. I'll bring that forward for your two-minute hits and I'll be back in 10.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, it's a pleasure to comment on some of these statements that have been made by the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. It's not easy to cover a very large bill, even within the confines of one hour, and there's a lot going on in this piece of legislation.

Just on the last piece, though, the roundabout issue: I do share the concern that the member from Kitchener-Conestoga has brought forward. If roundabouts are this new infrastructure model that we are moving forward with in the province of Ontario, it does actually make sense that people are trained—and it's part of the driver education piece, that people learn how to drive in a roundabout.

They are definitely very much present in the landscape of Kitchener—Waterloo, the entire region. I actually saw somebody go into one of those roundabouts, and they just kept going around and around and around—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was me.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's not surprising. So education is a piece of that.

I do want to say, the distracted driving piece, though, for us right now is quite prevalent. The fact of the matter is, the people who are driving in the province of Ontario need to acknowledge that sometimes we think we are

more important than we really are. When you are driving a car, that is essentially, potentially, a weapon, it makes sense to put aside the BlackBerry's, the smartphones, what have you, because you can—and the research is quite predominant—cause a lot of damage.

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This is a huge bill. We're going to be debating this for quite some time. I just want to say that I do want to acknowledge the work that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has done as well. This truly could be nonpartisan. There's a lot in this bill. We're going to have to pull back the layers, and we look forward to the debate on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He mentioned the beautiful part of the province he represents. One of my favourite parts in this province is Port Stanley. It's a cute little town that people should visit.

I just want to say to him that I know he expressed some frustration about demerit points and the minister not doing this quickly enough. When the seat belt legislation was brought in, I think it took about 17 years before demerit points were brought in, after the legislation.

These are very complicated issues in some cases when you change some of these motor vehicle laws. Every lawyer in the province is looking for a way to challenge any new law. Look at the challenges they've made to the breathalyzer act, on every constitutional aspect.

These are complicated things. I think the minister is trying his best to get it right. There are a lot of complexities and a lot of serious issues being dealt with, and I look forward to his continued input. I think he wants to make this a good bill. We have to look at the underlying theme here, and that is that there are certain serious threats to our friends, families and constituents on our roads, whether it be city roads or highways. There are a number of very good recommendations here to make these roads safer.

I just hope that we get to a point where we look at the best way of achieving this goal, through dialogue back and forth, through amendments, so that we do get this right, because we know we're going to be challenged by all these hungry, starving lawyers. It's guaranteed, so we'd better get it right.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They may be hungry, but they're not starving.

Mr. Mike Colle: Exactly. I was going to use another word. But anyway, we've got to get it right for that reason, because they're waiting in the woods. There are no lawyers here; I can say that—oh, no, here's one. Attorney General, I apologize after the fact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for consuming the entire

hour almost. I would say, the only real interruption was by his good friend from Cambridge, who almost ruled him out of order on a couple of occasions on straying off into talking about the College of Trades.

I was also glad he recognized that I have an opportunity later on to talk on this bill, because I do want to put on the record my concern over the years. I just want to put this on the record. My constituent Dan Boudreau from Newcastle writes just recently on Bill 73—on April 9, actually:

"It's been a while since we spoke on the old car emission fiasco, but I heard that there's a Bill 173 that is being proposed by the government. I'm sure this is being done as another tax grab for us taxpayers when the Drive Clean program gets finally squashed in the near future. I'm sure you are aware that Bill 173 will require us to get our vehicles certified yearly, which would put another financial" tax strain "on us taxpayers. The inconvenience this will impose is another sore spot for me."

This is one more example of the enforcement component that I mentioned, really, in two parts. They have increased the fine for driver distraction from about \$250 to \$1,000. They have increased the fine for dooring up to \$1,000, and for some other infractions they've doubled or tripled the fine. There are arguments about the deterrent factor in that, especially in the vehicle inspection provision, which the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned.

Those are a couple of points that I think are important. I am suspicious, and I spoke to Minister Murray earlier today about my suspicions about vehicle inspection stations. I think this is another example of Drive Clean gone wild. I think the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has done enough research on this bill that it has added value to the debate on Bill 173.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The very exuberant member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker. "Exuberance" is my middle name.

I just want to commend the member. I thought he gave a very good presentation, fairly detailed, where he went through the various parts of the act in order to explain what are some of the good ideas in it but also some of the problems with some of the stuff that has been laid out.

I just want to take these two minutes to go through the medical review part, because I think all of us in this House have had constituents come to our office who have had their licences revoked. Why? Because they happened to go to their doctor's office or some other medical professional, and they had some sort of an incident that, by law, forced the medical practitioner to send a letter to the Ministry of Transportation that resulted in the withdrawal of the licence.

We understand why that's done. There's some logic behind it. But, man, the problem in trying to get a licence back at times is quite difficult. I have to say—I can't remember her name; I think her name is Elaine—you have a person who works in your ministry who has been really, really good. Elaine: Is that her name? Yes,

Elaine—who has been really, really good at least at getting back to our constituency office and others to try to resolve some of these issues, but it shouldn't be up to an MTO staffer to work the magic in trying to get people's licences back. We need to have a quicker period of review in order to figure out: Is there a problem? If not, how do we get that person's licence back?

I have another one where I have a constituent who lost her licence—the same kind of story, but she has to go and do a special vision test which is only available in Sudbury. She lives in Kapuskasing. So what is she to do? She's a senior and doesn't want to drive all the way down to Sudbury. It's essentially about a seven-hour drive. She is without a driver's licence because she doesn't have the means to drive down there on her own, given her particular situation.

The other part of this is, if you're going to require those kinds of tests, we need to bring those tests as close to the person's residence as possible. I'll have a chance later—with exuberance, Speaker—to speak to this at more full length.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can't wait.

The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Timmins–James Bay, Durham, and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments on this legislation.

I'd also like to add to the roundabout issue. I met with the Ontario farmers' association recently, and their concern with roundabouts is that the ones being constructed aren't large enough for their large equipment in rural Ontario. To make the turn properly, you have to go up on the side of the road. They'd like to add to that discussion when we bring out some regulations on roundabouts—that they're always considered, because roundabouts aren't just in urban Ontario; they are on the

outskirts and in rural Ontario, so we need to ensure that the farmers are looked after when we're designing that.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence: I do have to say that Port Stanley is a beautiful village. They're starting their fishing season. The ice is starting to finally melt on Lake Erie.

The theatre there has really grown over the last few years. It has great productions in it. Last year, I won the 50-50 draw. It was quite surprising. I donated it back, just so everybody who's watching—I didn't keep the money. I gave it back. They have some great productions; great local talent.

Of course, I mentioned Mackie's, with the orangeade and their special secret sauce on their french fries. Anybody who does get to Port Stanley: Make sure you go to Mackie's.

Mr. Mike Colle: Bring us the sauce.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You've got to come and get it—and the orangeade. I digress a bit.

Again, I'd like to see this debate carry on going forward. Speaker, in 26 seconds, can I just talk about the College of Trades a little bit more?

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No? Okay; I won't try it. Anyway, I do want to bring this forward. As I said, there are some areas where we need to fill in the gaps that we talked about, and hopefully—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We need a better ratio of Tory members.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Ratios of Tory members: yes, but we won't get into that either.

Anyway, we need to continue this debate, fill in the gaps that are in this bill and carry it forward. Thank you very much, and I look forward to others' debate tonight.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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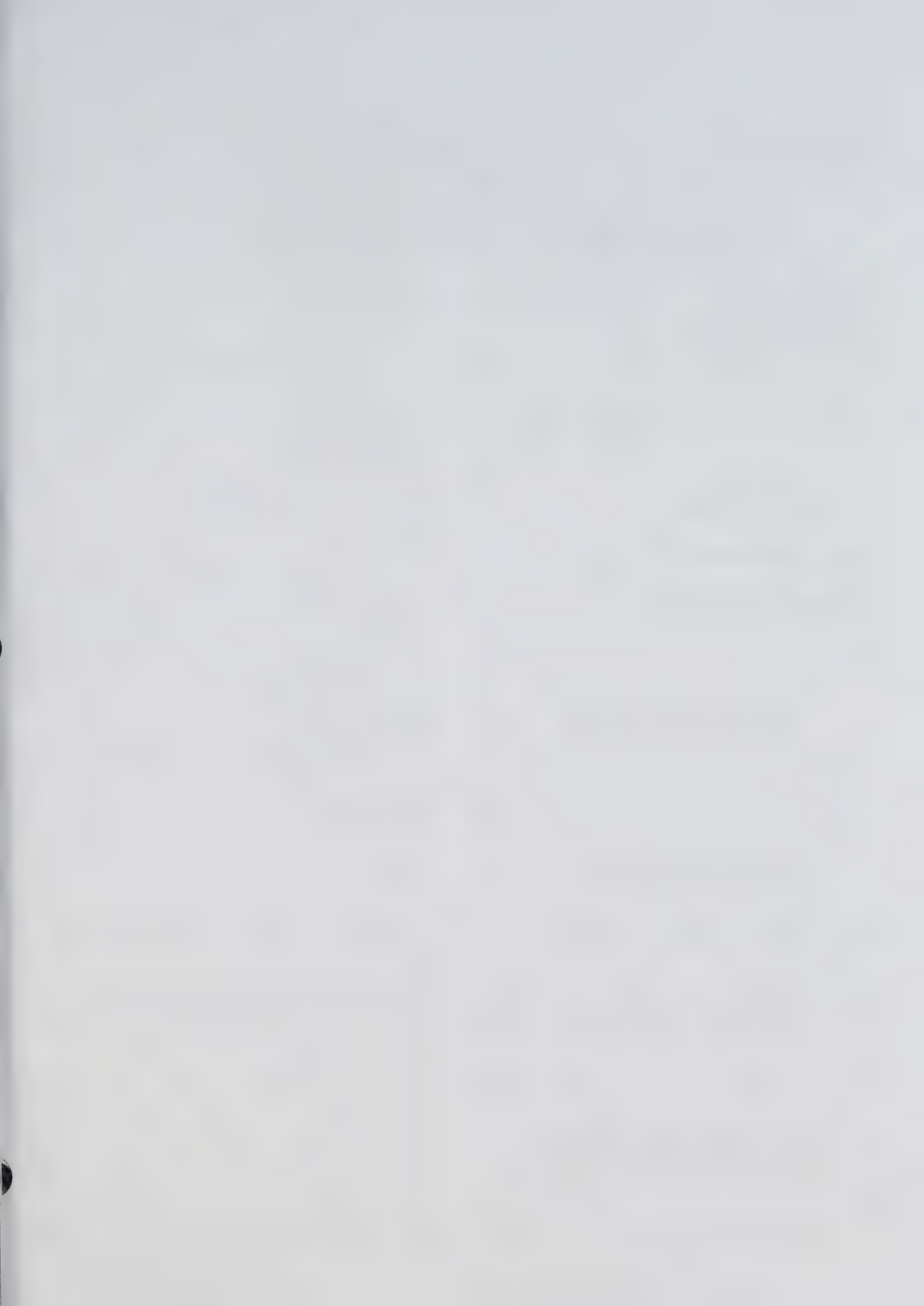
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of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
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des débats
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Thursday 10 April 2014

Jeudi 10 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, good morning. How are you today? I know that the sun is shining in Peterborough, because Mike Judson of CHEX news on TV told me that.

I want to move that we move forward with government order G85 this morning.

COMPANIES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS VISANT LES COMPAGNIES

Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend various companies statutes and to amend other statutes consequential to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant diverses lois visant les compagnies et apportant à d'autres lois des modifications corrélatives découlant de la Loi de 2010 sur les organisations sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. MacCharles.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. I'll be sharing my time this morning with my fantastic parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House to begin the debate on Bill 85, the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014. This act amends various statutes consequential to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010. If passed, it would have a significant impact on a law that affects a huge part of our province's economy and a significant part of our workforce. I will speak to that in just a moment. Today, I'd like to provide additional details about this act and how we are proposing to deliver on this government's commitment to modernize laws governing not-for-profit corporations in this province.

But first, let me take a moment to give some background and share that with the House. As many in the House will recall, in 2010 the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, commonly known as ONCA, passed with the support of all parties in this House. This passage fulfilled a commitment made in the 2005 and 2006 bud-

gets and put ONCA into place as foundational legislation providing modern corporate law to not-for-profit corporations in Ontario. Up to that point, the Corporations Act, the legislation governing not-for-profits in this province, had not been substantially updated in almost 60 years—a very long time. Now Bill 85 needs to be passed so ONCA can take effect.

Our government is committed to the not-for-profit sector. This sector is commonly referred to as the third sector, and plays a significant role in the economic life of our province. More than 50,000 not-for-profit corporations deliver a broad range of important social, cultural and other services. These include daycare centres; religious organizations; social and sports clubs; and arts, social services and health organizations, just to name a few.

It is estimated that this sector contributes \$50 billion annually to Ontario's economy, and according to the latest data we have, approximately 16% of Ontario's workforce is employed in the not-for-profit sector. There are also about 7.8 million volunteers working in not-for-profit organizations in Ontario as well.

I think we all know people in our network of family and friends who volunteer and make up part of that number. When you put it in context, more than half of the people in this province do some form of not-for-profit volunteering.

ONCA establishes modern governance rules for the not-for-profit sector. Our efforts to update this act will mean that it will provide not-for-profit corporations with many benefits. These include more modern corporate governance, improved accountability, an easier incorporation process and clarification that not-for-profits can engage in commercial activities where revenues are used by the corporation in support of their not-for-profit business.

ONCA has the broad support of stakeholders in the not-for-profit sector including the ONN—the Ontario Nonprofit Network—YMCA and United Way. We are also working closely with Community Legal Education Ontario to make sure support is provided to not-for-profit corporations as they transition to ONCA.

However, before ONCA can come into force, more work needs to be done. That's why, on June 5 of last year, we introduced the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. This act proposes consequential, clarifying and transitional amendments that are needed to proclaim ONCA. Until this act is passed, ONCA cannot come into force. If the amendments are passed by this Legislature, ONCA is anticipated to come into force no earlier than

six months after passage, in order to ensure adequate time for not-for-profit corporations to prepare for transition. These proposed amendments would affect 86 statutes overseen by more than 15 ministries—that's quite a few. They are necessary, non-contentious and technical amendments, Speaker.

In just a moment, my parliamentary assistant will provide you with more details about how these amendments will play out in the not-for-profit sector in our province. People ask me that all the time; they say, "What does this really mean?" So I'm looking forward to his remarks.

I hope I've been able to provide this House with some additional information on the proposed amendments included in the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013, that are critical before ONCA can be proclaimed. Ontario's thriving not-for-profit sector is dependent on us to fulfil our commitment to providing this modern legislation as a foundation for this sector that gives so much to the economy and the workforce of this province.

The government remains fully committed to implementing this important legislation. We also recognize that the not-for-profit sector is concerned about the uncertainty of the timing of the implementation. We are eager, with the assent of this House, to take the remaining steps to complete this important journey that we began four years ago.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I invite my parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Consumer Services, the member for Brampton West, to provide you with more details on how Bill 85 will benefit the not-for-profit sector in Ontario and, quite frankly, benefit all of us. He'll also speak to how the amendments will affect this very important sector.

Thank you very much for your time, and I'm very happy to turn over the balance of the time to my parliamentary assistant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It is an honour to rise in the House today to add to the comments made by the honourable Minister of Consumer Services.

The minister has outlined the benefits that the Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act will bring to this sector if we are able to pass Bill 85 to bring ONCA into force. With these benefits in mind, I would now like to discuss the details of the amendments that Bill 85 will put into effect.

0910

There are, in fact, more than 80 amendments to statutes that must be made in this bill. Many of these amendments are consequential amendments that would change cross-references in a statute from the current Corporations Act to ONCA.

The proposed clarifying amendments would address potential ambiguities of provisions in ONCA and the Corporations Act. For example, one of these proposed amendments clarifies that the Corporations Act will continue to apply to pension fund societies and employees' mutual benefit societies.

The proposed transitional amendments would also address items to facilitate a corporation's transition from one act to another. For example, one of our proposed amendments would provide transition rules for existing corporations, such as shared capital social clubs, to continue under the Ontario Business Corporations Act during a five-year transition period after ONCA comes into force.

One proposed amendment to ONCA, if passed, would also respond to a key concern of stakeholders in clarifying that new limited voting rights for non-voting members would not apply during the three-year transition period following proclamation of ONCA. This would provide more time to consult on this issue with the sector.

If these technical amendments are not made, it may lead to confusion, ambiguity and unintended and unforeseen consequences. As the minister mentioned earlier, the amendments proposed in the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act that we introduced on June 5, 2013, must be passed before ONCA can come into force.

I would also like to share some details about the proposed implementation of the act. With a few exceptions, the act will generally apply automatically to not-for-profit corporations that are incorporated under Ontario law. Existing not-for-profit corporations will have a three-year transition period once the act comes into effect. This would allow them to make any necessary changes to their incorporation and any other documents to comply with the act; for example, letters patent and any supplementary letters patent, bylaws and special resolutions.

The act sets out how Ontario's not-for-profit corporations are created, governed and dissolved. It provides a modern legal framework for not-for-profit corporations by ensuring there is greater transparency and accountability in how not-for-profit corporations are governed. Within this framework, there are a few highlights that I would like to bring to the attention of the House at this time.

If passed, the act would make a new distinction between public-benefit corporations and other not-for-profit corporations. It would make it mandatory for corporations to make proxies available to members, and would clarify that not-for-profit corporations can engage in commercial activities, if the activities advance or support the corporation's not-for-profit goals.

The act would also allow for a simpler process to review the corporation's records in some situations, and would require a corporation with two or more classes or groups of members to have the classes or groups set out in the corporation's articles. It would also provide clear rules for corporate governance and increased accountability to its members. It also lists specific requirements for directors and officers to report conflicts of interest in certain circumstances, and provide members with the remedies they can take if they believe directors are not acting in the best interests of the corporation.

In terms of scope, if passed, the new act would affect every corporation without shared capital that has been incorporated under an act of the Ontario Legislature, including the current Corporations Act.

Our government has prepared some tools to make it easier for existing not-for-profit corporations to make the transition to the new act. This electronic tool kit is available on our ministry website. As well, we have given a grant to Community Legal Education Ontario to provide support to not-for-profit corporations during the three-year transition period, should this bill be passed, and we will continue to work closely with the Ontario Nonprofit Network and sector partners on ways to smooth this transition.

So those are some of the highlights of this bill, Bill 85, that we're debating today. I join with the Minister of Consumer Services in supporting and encouraging swift passage of this very important legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to start by saying that this is a significantly comprehensive bill. I'd refer to it more as an omnibus bill, really. It could be some housekeeping. I am surprised—it's 100 pages and eight sections, quite a technical bill. I haven't completely read it. I was here this morning, actually, to listen to a one-hour lead by the government. They used not even 15 minutes. I think that's an insult to this place. I want them to make a full disclosure on a piece of legislation that the members here are anxious to—we would love to support it if it's an improvement to our economy. It is relating to amendments, some company statutes and things like that.

We naively assumed that they were going to deal with the plight of the economy of Ontario—a finance minister that hasn't got the foggiest idea of what's going on. He's saying one thing and the media is saying another. This bill doesn't tell me a thing that needs to be done to make Ontario a better place, to create jobs and strengthen the economy.

The first section here is consistent between section 2 and section 3. It amends the act with application to not-for-profit corporations. Now, that's a portion that—I know our caucus would like to strengthen the not-for-profit sector. Why? Most sectors are not-for-profit in Ontario. Heinz has left.

If you want to look to the future with any confidence, you should look to the past. A great predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. There is nothing that they've done in the last while, including Bill 85 and the two bills I spoke on yesterday, 173 and 176, another two bills—this may not be an appropriate word. I think it's duplicitous, actually. Some of the stuff they're saying is contrary to what they're actually doing. In fact, we were talking on the highway traffic improvement act yesterday. The Minister of Transportation is here and perhaps he'll speak for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand in the House today and talk about the not-for-profit sector and charities. I don't know if our province would be as good as it is today if we didn't have so many charities and not-for-profits out there raising money to support the things that we all need in our communities.

I was talking to a member of the Legion, one of our World War II veterans, just a couple of weeks ago, and he was saying that the government has changed the rules and regulations, meaning—if you think of the Legion, they collect money through break-open tickets, through meat draws. They distribute poppies. They run bingo's still, some of them. They can't use the money the way they used to because of a change in government regulation. So when you have a Legion that needs a new roof—the roof is leaking—or they need a new air conditioner, they can't use the money for that anymore, which they used to be able to. The question they put to me was, "How are we going to raise money for academic scholarships, to support Little League baseball and track and field, and our veterans' comforts when we won't have a clubhouse to do it in?" Because they can't use the money as they used to, to repair the roof.

I think there's a dilemma there. I think what the government should do is investigate what changes were made and how they can correct them, how they can change that around to allow charities and not-for-profit groups such as the Royal Canadian Legion to be able to use the money the way they used to be able to do. I would ask the government to do that, whether it's specifically in this bill or another bill that came along a while ago, but I think it's something out there that—I know we all respect our charities and not-for-profits, but some of them are hurting because of some government action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there are so many bills, including Bill 141, that deal with the economy, apprenticeships, infrastructure, education, training and tax reform. The member for Durham doesn't understand the economic importance of this. This is a technical bill.

0920

I was the president of a not-for-profit called the Canadian Urban Institute. What the member opposite doesn't seem to realize is that Ontario has the fourth-largest not-for-profit sector, I think, in the world. It is one of the fastest-growing. The not-for-profit that I was president of doubled in size, did the climate change strategy for the Philippines, built about 50,000 affordable housing units, introduced private property and local democratic structures to Ukraine, designed an energy system for Calgary that saves the city \$32 billion and employs people without very much government money, and has to raise all of that money through contract work internationally and through working for companies and governments around the world. The ignorance shown by the member from Durham about this sector—

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I have not attacked personally; I've attacked the policy. I would expect he would apologize and then resign.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would leave that up to the speaker.

The Minister of Transportation, if you could stay to the legislation that's in front of us.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, ignorance is a lack of knowledge, and I think the member demonstrated it. If you do not understand—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —as the member for Quinte West clearly does not either, that this is one of our fastest-growing, independent, not-government-subsidized sectors—he just put forward every stereotype, which is why this technical bill is so important for the governance reforms, for the complex financial relationships they have. We need this. The sector needs it to continue growing and creating jobs. I'm sad the party opposite didn't understand that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to just come back to the comments offered by the Minister of Transportation on the issue of this bill, because one of the things I note is the fact that it was introduced almost a year ago and it hasn't been debated. This was the lead-off speech this morning. I think the members would normally expect that in a leadoff, the minister responsible would provide a thorough, insightful analysis of the bill. I think the shock, quite frankly, of members expecting to hear that kind of analysis and expecting to have that kind of thorough discussion, when a one-hour leadoff is just that, a one-hour opportunity—it comes as a bit of a surprise to members on this side of the House that it can be done in such a summary fashion.

Perhaps rather than talking about anyone's particular ignorance, what we should be talking about are the details of this bill in a manner that will further thoughtful debate. When you have reduced this apparently important piece of legislation that's been sitting in the wings for nearly a year, and you can dismiss it as the lead speaker, in, I believe, about 15 minutes, then I think it sheds a different light on it than we certainly understood it to have. We were prepared to listen for one hour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Consumer Services, you have two minutes.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to acknowledge the participation of the MPPs from Durham, Windsor-Tecumseh, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the MPP from York-Simcoe.

Just on the issue of it being a substantive bill and some suggestion by the opposition that we need more time—you may have noticed, Speaker, that I kept my comments quite limited, as did my parliamentary assistant, so there would be more time on the clock for this. This is not new; this has been introduced before. The members opposite know full well that what gets called up is discussed by House leaders and so on and there are many good things that the government would like to call up, but in the context of a minority government much of this is negotiated.

In terms of the bill, I just want to close by emphasizing how important this is to our economy. My colleague to my left, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, sees this as very critical to the province of Ontario, as do all the other ministers who have some linkage to what we're bringing forward today.

When you look at those killer facts—\$50 billion annually is contributed by this sector; 16% of our workforce is employed in the not-for-profit sector; 7.8 million volunteers are working in this sector—it does affect all of us.

Quite frankly, the sector is keen to get this going, and there has to be transition time. So I really encourage everyone in the House to support this so that the transition can start.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's what?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's Volunteer Week.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, it's Volunteer Week. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure reminded me that it's Volunteer Week. What a great way to end this discussion. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity to spend some time—it looks like I have a fair bit of time—to address Bill 85.

Bill 85 seems to be the son of Bill 65—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Or daughter.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —or daughter. It was being kicked around in committee and in this Legislature. I think it was back in 2013.

The order before the House, Bill 85, the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013—we understand that it's a series of technical amendments. It seems to be page after page after page. As of this morning, we have a little bit to go on.

I did listen to the minister's presentation. With respect to this legislation, she raised the question: What does this really mean? She didn't answer the question, so I think it's important that we continue this debate and keep this going.

Now, the minister did give us a few hints. When you talk about 50,000 non-profits, it's a bit of thin gruel this morning, for those who may be monitoring this debate, to know at this point, from the two speeches from the government, what we have here. But the minister did indicate that Bill 85, the son or daughter of Bill 65, does address some long-standing problems. The minister mentioned 60 years, so I guess it is time this government got on with it.

In areas of governance, and the minister mentioned accountability—there are two big areas that we have been dealing with for well over two years, on public accounts, with respect to Ornge.

The minister made mention of trying to kind of grease the wheels and ease the process with respect to incorporation. I know that is a bone of contention for so many of the very small non-profits. Out of the 50,000 non-profits that were mentioned, many of them are very, very small.

Essentially, the meetings would be probably nothing more than the chair or the president, the treasurer and the secretary. You're not sitting around the table with a board of directors of 15 people.

The minister made mention that Bill 85 addresses the need for more revenue opportunities—I'm not sure what the minister said exactly—which is so important for the non-profit sector.

Things have changed in 60 years. Sixty years ago, there weren't the government grants to keep a lot of these organizations viable. Sixty years later—today—there are not the government grants to keep these organizations going and to keep them viable. We do have to look for other measures.

0930

The minister made mention that this bill—actually, I really can't find anybody out in the non-profit sector who knows about it or knows that the government has been working on it for the last seven years, something that goes back 60 years. But it is a piece of legislation, as we've just been told, that touches on 86 different statutes and involves, in one way or another, 15 different ministries. I take that very seriously; I think some may brush it off as, "These are merely technical amendments."

Oftentimes, the devil is in the details, and I just hope to give, perhaps, some examples from my own riding where some of these technical details—and I oftentimes throw them into that box that I label the myriad constellation of bureaucratic rules and regulations; the picayune forms to fill out and the boxes to check off.

In the Legislature, we're referring to these as technical details, but these technical details can really cause grief for our sports and recreation organizations; our agriculture or commodity groups; our farm organizations; certainly the outdoors organizations; the various environmental groups, so many of them that build on a platform of a very small, local, non-profit organization; and, of course, our so-valuable health and social services non-profit organizations.

As I mentioned, this current government started consultations seven years ago and produced the bill. Now at that time, and I guess this would be in 2010, they produced a bill called Bill 65. This would be the father, or the mother, of Bill 85—I guess we have to cover ourselves carefully when we speak in here.

You would think that after this kind of a lengthy consultation process that by now we would have had a finished product—or last year, as MPP Munro mentioned—we would have had something to work with. We supported it; all three parties supported it. As I recall, it went through first reading and second reading debate. Hearings were held, or maybe a hearing was held. I wasn't there; I'm not sure where the hearing was held—maybe Toronto, maybe Sudbury. I guess people didn't show up for hearings, from what I understand.

There was third reading debate, but there it sat. It never did receive royal assent, and there were some reasons for that. I guess it's something like 101 pages of reasons why it was not signed by the Queen.

Seven years going on 60 years' consultation—that's in the category of snail-like consultation in my view. I think it's unfortunate if the 50,000 non-profits that we're dealing with have not been involved in this consultation process. I think that's unfortunate. I don't know whether the government has a fax number and an email address for the 50,000 non-profits, and I don't know whether the cabinet minister keeps in touch with these non-profits. They have to register to be a non-profit so their coordinates would be there in a computer somewhere, I assume. I hope they didn't get wiped out a few weeks ago by either the present government or the former government. There seem to be two Liberal governments we're talking about here.

But anyway, these groups are on record; I hope they've been kept informed. Maybe it was contracted out to the Ontario Nonprofit Network or some other group. Or maybe there was the assumption that it would kind of just happen on its own. But communication is so important; I'm not sure whether that communication has been adequate over the past seven years.

I do agree, and I think the minister stated this too, that the role of our non-profits in our communities is significant. Economic studies have laid this out, the kind of value volunteers provide in our communities. The legislation has a worthy goal—I think that was articulated in the brief comments this morning—very simply: helping the non-profit corporations and the organizations to organize themselves. That's part of management. Organization is part of management. Leadership is part of management.

We look to government for some leadership with respect to this very important sector. We certainly look to this government to play a role in the control function, the accountability, as was mentioned this morning. It's all part of management, and it's all part of governance, whether it's at the provincial level or at that organization-by-organization level—something that we see as MPPs.

Oftentimes, if we're doing our jobs, we are invited or sit in on the annual general meeting of so many of these organizations. Certainly with the farm organizations, whether I'm invited or not, I try and show up, because I've been going to farm meetings for as long as I can remember. Part of that goal is to help them to operate in a better fashion. To help them help themselves, so to speak.

When we're talking about Bill 85, we realize the original Bill 65 replaces legislation that did govern non-profits, legislation that apparently sat there for—people used to say it sat there for 50 years; well, now it's 60 years. Time has gone on. It has been seven years under this government.

At the same time, the responsibility of the non-profits and the various charitable organizations has grown immensely over the number of years. Much more complex services are provided by the non-profits. There's also the fact that there's a very big difference between non-profit organizations like private clubs—for example, golf clubs—compared to organizations that have a mission of

charity or societal service; different from the non-profits that serve as an umbrella group for some of the other organizations.

We're looking at a housekeeping bill that is to amend the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, which never did receive royal assent—never did do any work, so to speak. I hope all MPPs address this in a more fulsome manner. It gives all of us an opportunity to speak to the value of volunteers in the communities that we're charged with representing. We are elected representatives, and our job is made a lot easier by these organizations that help structure the issues out there, whether it's health and social problems, opportunities for kids who play soccer or sports—or help structure cattlemen to deal with the tough times over the last 10 years with, back then, the advent of a disease which has eliminated probably half the herd in Ontario and, unfortunately, has eliminated a lot of cattlemen in that business. A lot of them are now cash crops. They're growing corn and soybeans and winter wheat.

It's an opportunity for us to discuss some changes that we should consider that would hopefully come through Bill 85 and Bill 65. When you've got 101 pages, or whatever it is, of legislation that we're talking about today, I don't know how many pages of regulation we're going to see down the road emanating from that legislation.

It is appropriate to talk about this. We know this is National Volunteer Week, again, reflecting the importance of volunteering in our society. Volunteers are the people that we deal with. We have the fortunate situation as MPPs that we do deal with the leaders, the elites in our society, those people who keep the women's institutes running, keep the Rotary club going, deal with minor hockey or deal with members of the local naturalist club. These volunteers—and we have the awards ceremonies—I consider them the elites of our society. They quietly work behind the scenes. They gain from that, as well, feelings of self-worth, of satisfaction.

0940

For many young people, it is, perhaps, a bit of a track to gain experience in how to run a meeting, how to be a secretary, how to be a treasurer. I see people who come up through 4-H and Junior Farmers. Fifty years later, they're on the board of directors of the pork producers or the ginseng growers association. They know how to run a meeting; they know how to take minutes.

We have a problem in the province of Ontario with many of the condominium boards. The people who sit on these boards or chair a condominium unit-holders' corporation—maybe they haven't come up through 4-H. Maybe they haven't been inculcated in the Ministry of Agriculture direction on how to take minutes or explain what a quorum is. In much of rural Ontario, we have that background. Perhaps on the condominium corporations, that kind of background isn't there. Again, that's where government can help out with those kinds of corporations, because we've seen the payoff with our volunteer organizations.

Again, government does recognize volunteers, and they can help not so much put the money where the

mouth is but just provide that kind of information, education and awareness of how to be better organized through your non-profit to achieve your ultimate goal, whether it's having a very good golf club or perhaps fraternal organization or to run your local Community Living organization, for example.

Like many MPPs, we have the opportunity to take part in the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies. Now, there's a window on the non-profits in our areas. This Ontario Volunteer Service Award recognizes individual volunteers for continuous years of commitment and dedicated service to an organization. They're all tied in with an organization.

Down in my riding, in Haldimand-Norfolk, it's a full-night affair. It's held in the Vittoria community centre. It's a beautiful community centre out in the middle of farm country, down there in apple country. It amazes me how there are always a few awards—there's always someone who comes up towards the end of the evening who has been contributing to a non-profit for 50 years or more. Now, that's dedication, and that says to me that, yes, we as elected representatives have to do a good job on fleshing this out. I think we all have a responsibility, in spite of what's happened in the last seven years, to make sure that our non-profits know what's going on and what government is doing for them.

There are other awards for volunteers, Ontario government ones: the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers, the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students. I believe a case can be made with respect to the Order of Ontario; that's the province's highest award. I consider that a volunteer award. It's often presented to someone who has done a tremendous amount of work for non-profits.

In my riding, all the firefighters, except the two chiefs, are volunteers—they're all volunteers. They're working through, essentially, a system of non-profit organizations backed up by the county, and the province somewhat, for training. I always attend the volunteer firefighters' awards ceremony in Haldimand county. That is quite an evening. There is the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, which I have seen presented on occasions. That's a volunteer award.

I'm very proud of the fact that when I was in government—this goes back to 1995, MPP Munro would know about this and also MPP O'Toole. We brought in a program—it was a requirement for students to put in a number of volunteer hours before they could graduate. Over the years, I continue to see these new young people oftentimes coming in each year, helping us run the community halls, the ethnic halls, and helping with serving food.

We call it volunteer hours, although it was a requirement. I guess it was a mandatory requirement to volunteer—it sounds like the military—kind of a mandatory opportunity. I don't know whether it was Lyn McLeod who coined that expression; I'm not sure. Maybe MPP Bradley would know which provincial parliamentarian coined that phrase—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just ask the members on the far right if you would just keep the noise down.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I didn't hear any noise from MPP Bradley—a mandatory opportunity. Anyway, in the Mike Harris days, we brought in a requirement that you volunteer. It sounds like the First World War.

Again, this is a housekeeping bill, by and large. It allows that transition from previous statutes—Bill 65 to Bill 85—that transition to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act that was passed but not proclaimed about a year ago.

It's 101 pages. I hope that's not reason to worry. Quite honestly, as I understand it, it's to make incorporation a little easier. That's a bit of a bone of contention for a lot of the smaller groups.

Again, my question: How many pages of regulation will be generated from 101 pages of legislation? There's probably a formula there. I guess we probably could expect a fair bit, but I don't know.

As we have all mentioned this morning, volunteers are so important. Like everyone in this House, I am so busy on weekends, year in and year out, attending the parades and the fairs, the church suppers, the United Way functions—I could go on for the next half-hour about that, and maybe I will.

All of these organizations, all of these events that we have the privilege of attending—although I guess some of our fellows here won't be able to attend the Easter Bunny parade that is happening somewhere in Toronto. Is that down in the Beaches? I don't know what happened. Somebody laid an egg on that one.

Anyway, all of these parades, these great events that pull our community together—we have the luxury of being invited, or we show up anyway, whether we're invited or not—have to be organized, and the basis is oftentimes your local chamber of commerce, your board of trade, or your agricultural society. These events, certainly in my riding, are volunteer events. They are so important. They are the crux of our area tourism industry, our recreational or agri-food tourism, and what we have to offer locally.

I think of the Norfolk County Fair. It's one of the largest fairs in Ontario; it has been going for 170 years. I wasn't there 170 years ago, but it would have started as a completely volunteer-run event. It's a gigantic endeavour now; about 100,000 people a year come through there. I make darn sure I have an exhibit at that fair, when you've got just about everybody from—well, Norfolk county is only 60,000, and 100,000 show up. Again, it's run by the Norfolk agricultural society. It's something that has been going on—I may not see it, but it will be going on for over 200 years. These people bring money into the area, the visitors from outside the county. They eat in our restaurants, buy gasoline and spend money on local businesses. It's quite an event, one that is flexible and continually changing with the times—up-to-date entertainment, for example. Other fairs in our riding are much smaller but there's still that kind of trickle-down, trickle-up effect.

0950

Now, we're getting into the time of year for the home shows. I just attended the Caledonia home show, which has morphed into a—what did they call it?—"sip and savour," where local grape growers, wine producers and meat processing and cheese production facilities would be there showing off their wares.

Down in the two counties I represent, it's a greater than one-in-three chance when you dial 911 that there will be a volunteer connected somehow going out and responding to that call. Obviously, if it's a fire, it will be a volunteer firefighter who is there, that person who is willing to put their life on the line and provide that first response when some of us get into an emergency. Police calls: We have a very good system of volunteer police officers, the auxiliary officers who are there as backup. For them, and I see it with the volunteer firefighters, there are good things in it as well: a means of socializing, of meeting new people. You really can't put a monetary value on something like that.

But with so many people—and I do encourage people who are maybe somewhat socially isolated. We see the opportunities for younger people. Maybe they have intellectual disabilities and they tie in with the local Lions Club, for example, or they get adopted by the firefighters or the sports team, and that helps with respect to socialization. For many, that community contact, I'm sure, has a beneficial effect with respect to perhaps any underlying mental health problems, for example. I guess you could try to put some money on it. It alleviates any additional burden on our health care system.

Church groups: We remember the uproar a number of years ago when the new health regulations came in and had a big impact on the church supper. Many of these meals, these bake sales, were the last lifeline of financial survival for some churches. I'm really not aware of anyone getting sick from sitting down in a church basement to a roast beef dinner or eating an apple pie—you certainly hear about them in some of the very large food plants—but the ramifications of that particular crack-down are still being felt.

Again, that rolls into that red tape box. I think it's really unfortunate. Red tape is my fear with this legislation here today. Are we in any way creating additional bureaucratic rules or regulations that are going to discourage people from coming out and supporting our non-profits?

There's an article in the Globe and Mail about changes to the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act and fears that it will negatively impact small not-for-profits. And again, my concern with this legislation that we're debating is, what are the downsides? Is there collateral damage? Maybe it will take another seven years to see what that is.

A number of my staff who were talking about this bill are involved in non-profit organizations. They've had some bad experience on the red tape side of it. One staffer walked into a situation where the previous board was not knowledgeable in successfully navigating the

swamp of red tape which was supposed to be overseen by government bureaucrats. As a result, it was very damaging to the organization itself. He saw finger-pointing, there was blame-shifting, and it put quite a load on the shoulders of the volunteer board members.

Another staff member had negative problems with respect to the lottery commission, and was really questioning: Does an established organization need to provide its constitution to the local issuing agency? Is there a real purpose in this, or is it just filed and put on a shelf somewhere? We know the changes to lottery regulations came about due to some abuse by a few organizations. I'm all for reporting what money is being spent and what it's being spent on, but very clearly, after Ornge, for example, we all agree we need more transparency and accountability—we need the rules, but cracking down on non-profits and creating new rules because of a few bad apples and violators is not the way to fix the situation. It seems to be the trend: Create more rules, create more paperwork and, unfortunately, drive the organization out of existence. Essentially, you kill the goose that's laying the golden egg.

Now, it's not entirely in this government's control, but the process for volunteer checks is frustrating. Often, long-standing volunteers have to take time off work to go for fingerprints. Then they wait for weeks for the results. There's no question we need to ensure our children are safe, say, in our sports organizations and the scouting movements and many other organizations like that, but it's got to be made a little bit more volunteer-friendly.

There has recently been a casualty as a result of over-regulation and red tape. Just last January, the National Wild Turkey Federation pulled all of its fundraising out of Canada. This organization is very important down in Norfolk county, Haldimand and much of rural southern Ontario, with the advent of the wild turkey, first introduced in Norfolk back in the 1980s, maybe 1986, through one of those excellent MNR programs. So the NWTf worked with OFAH, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. They worked with MNR. They brought the wild turkey back to Ontario. Now we've lost that organization. Federal rules for the not-for-profits were the reason that was given. There was never any suggestion of breaking the rules; it was just the difficulty in complying. That was responsible for this North American organization pulling out of Canada. That's unfortunate. I would go to that wild turkey dinner every year. I would throw in my money. One night I came home with a chocolate lab. I mean, you could buy just about anything there. You could bid on just about anything and I actually bought a handful—if anybody here has ever owned a Labrador retriever, let alone a chocolate one.

Ducks Unlimited: Now there's another very, very successful and valuable organization—the work that they have done in preserving wetlands. Ducks Unlimited has been around since 1938. I guess they precede—the grandfather or grandmother of some of these pieces of legislation. It's a science-based organization, a habitat preservation organization. In 1938, they worked with US

dollars—volunteer-raised dollars. Now, that all changed as a result of a series of events that occurred, actually, in my riding and also the member for Oxford's riding. A fellow named Hazard Campbell—he lived in Buffalo but he hunted down at Turkey Point, at Turkey Point Co. and TP Farms. He convinced some of his friends, Canadian members of the duck hunting company, to come over to a volunteer fundraising dinner in the United States. They came home so impressed and they held the first Canadian Ducks Unlimited dinner in 1974, in Tillsonburg.

Dr. Duncan Sinclair—he lives in MPP Jeff Yurek's riding—was part of that first dinner committee. In fact, he became the national president of DU. He was also a member of the MNR's fish and wildlife advisory board.

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Then, later, they moved the chapter down to Port Rowan, in my riding. It's known as chapter number 1 of Ducks Unlimited. Since then, DU, Wild Turkey and the Ruffed Grouse Society—and I'm a member of a number of these organizations—have used that fundraising model, volunteers to raise millions and millions of dollars for wildlife habitat. As you get bigger, you do hire staff as well.

So certainly down my way are marshes, uplands, rivers; they're hotbeds of conservation supported by a myriad of non-profit outdoors organizations. There's a number of DU chapters in my riding. Dunnville: I know their fundraiser is coming up very soon. I donated one of my father's books on Long Point for that night, which I'm not able to attend.

Norfolk county's Delta Waterfowl chapter is one of the top Canadian fundraisers for that organization. Another group, Long Point Waterfowl, has got a fundraiser coming up. I know former MPP Tim Peterson has shown up there, and he has ended up getting the winning bid on a hunt in Africa, plus a photo hunt in Africa. It was a very generous night, as I recall, for Tim Peterson. Long Point Waterfowl is a top-rated research organization.

Our local fish and game clubs—I'm a member of Long Point Fish and Game—have such an important role in habitat restoration. In addition to Long Point, we have the Long Point Bay Anglers' Association. I was a guest speaker there just last Saturday, talking about the threat of Asian carp and how that is going to eliminate their fishing opportunities for pike and perch and smallmouth bass. We have the Delhi District Anglers, the Dunnville Hunters and Anglers Conservation Club, the Caledonia Hunters and Anglers—the Caledonia group has done a tremendous amount of work with young people and getting them involved in the outdoors.

Up until not too long ago, we had the Simcoe and District Fish and Game Club. They have recently become dormant or perhaps disbanded, again because of the struggle in finding volunteers. I only hope that this kind of legislation, Bill 85, Bill 65, and the impact that it's having not only on other ministries and other pieces of legislation but also the impact it may have on some of our groups—I'd hate to see an organization like Canada's

Wild Turkey or the Simcoe Fish and Game disappear just because they've had it with filling out all the forms.

We had the formation many, many years ago, in 1962, of our Norfolk Field Naturalists Club. I can remember attending those meetings 50 years ago. Now it's 50 years of research and valuable bird counts and education.

Long Point has been designated a world biosphere reserve by UNESCO. That was in 1986, and it takes a non-profit to keep that one going. Bird Studies Canada started back in 1959 as the Long Point Bird Observatory. It's presently headquartered in Port Rowan, a national authority on bird migration and conservation—again, an organization that had its genesis back in the late 1950s with volunteers; birdwatchers who had the vision.

Up until recently, we did a lot of work through our land stewardship councils. They're still doing a very good job tied in with the Norfolk Federation of Agriculture in forming the ALUS program, Alternate Land Use Services, to provide financial assistance to those farmers who want to set aside maybe 18, eight or 16 rows of corn or that corner of the field where there are going to be cattails anyway. Again, this is all for the good as far as habitat, clean air and water.

We have the Haldimand and Norfolk Land Stewardship Councils, two rapidly growing new non-profits. The Norfolk and Haldimand Woodlot Owners again have taken on a lot of that stewardship of our forest cover down in our area. We see the rise of non-profits, and we see the decline of others, and I don't want government to, in any way, be instrumental in encouraging the latter to occur. We don't want that.

I mentioned the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides who have planted millions and millions of trees. I recall the training we received. I went through Sea Scouts in Port Dover. Our leaders were commercial fishermen, war veterans. They knew the ways of the world. I benefited immensely from that.

I know my staff talked about how they have benefited from organizations they were involved in—sports organizations. Now I see them as they sit on the boards. They serve as coaches and assistant coaches. They chaperone school trips, get people out to the games and things like that. Why are they involved? Why are we all involved? Well, they believe in their community, but they remember and they respect those who ran the sports clubs before, the ones who sat on the boards previously and kept everything vibrant back when they were kids. Now as adults, they realize they were beneficiaries of these non-profits. Now they know it's their turn to give back—opportunities for their kids, their neighbours' kids and it's an opportunity for they themselves to reap the benefits, the fellowship, the friendship of sitting on these boards, but they don't want to have the rancour and some of the disruptive incidents that can occur on these boards.

In many ways, computers and technology have made some of this aspect of volunteering a little easier, but the reports come in. There's too much paperwork, and there's too much red tape. We've got to do everything we can to make it easier. I think that's the goal of this legislation, to help the people who are helping us run these

non-profits. These people are hard to find. Recruitment is a major, major ongoing goal of these organizations. I see so many organizations—church organizations, farm organizations—reach out to younger people. It's easier for many people just to send in some money or write a cheque, donate some money rather than donating their time. The world is changing. This legislation has to reflect that. I truly hope it will.

Some people aren't necessarily flush with money but, in many cases, they're even less flush with the time necessary either to show up at the meetings, let alone spend time filling out forms and dealing with red tape.

There's one incident that one of my staff indicated quite recently—I think it was this winter. She spent 22 hours online. We've got a computerized system, but it still took her 22 hours online—she's computer literate—so that she could assist a novice hockey team. The training had nothing to do with teaching kids the game or helping them develop skills.

Her perception was, it was just the way for the global association to essentially cover its hide in case an incident should occur somewhere, and all in all she says that the training could have been done in about two hours. At the end of the day, she feels that it's still not going to keep the bad people from coaching. She said, "Just because the computer tells you you've passed the test doesn't make you a better person or a coach. It's to ensure associations protect themselves from legal responsibility." She obviously feels parents need to reflect on their own behaviour, either in the arena or out of the arena. They have to understand what they're doing makes it harder and harder for minor hockey associations to fill these coaching spots.

1010

When you're a volunteer, you're giving up your very early mornings, your evenings, planning the drills and the practices. It's really disheartening when a parent, as she was explaining, is continually riding you for not doing this or not doing that, for not giving little Johnny the ice time or giving little Susie the ice time.

There's an article that was on the front of last Friday's Maclean's magazine. There's a picture of a lawyer and a father sitting on a bench beside a young hockey player. The headline: "How Parents (and Their Lawyers) Are Killing Hockey: Inside the Madness that Is Driving Kids, Volunteers and Referees out of Canada's Game."

This is a quote from the article: "Local volunteers must now follow lawyer-designed protocols to deal with problem parents, lest the matter wind up in civil or criminal courts." Can this legislation help out on that kind of stuff? Again, I guess time will be the test of that, and with respect to this piece of legislation, there does seem to be all kinds of time.

So there's an article that deals with this obsession that parents have with Canada's game and attempting to turn Johnny or Susie into the next Great One or Rob Blake or Hayley Wickenheiser.

The article goes on: "... a link between parental obsessiveness and children's interest in the game. In short: Gung-ho adults may be costing hockey young players."

Here are some stats. Again, I'm hoping the government monitors—I hope they're keeping an eye out for the red flags with respect to hockey. "Since 2009, enrolment in tyke through atom (ages five through 10) has slid by about 6,300 players...." That's 3%. You look at peewee, bantam and midget enrolment; it has dropped by 7.4%. Again, time commitment, the expense, safety concerns: These are some of the reasons that are given by Hockey Canada.

We see the Ontario Minor Hockey Association making it mandatory for all parents to take this online course called Respect in Sport. It costs \$12.

Some associations are sending letters, saying to parents that unless a player has one certified adult attached to the name, the youngster won't be able to play hockey. That's a barrier. That reminds me of the mandatory certification so many people are complaining about with respect to the College of Trades.

We know there is a handful of overzealous parents, but forcing everyone to take the program and charging them \$12—some people see that as a bit of a money grab. What is the answer, to have better-behaved parents and others in sport? We're not sure. I don't know whether adding more red tape or hitting people with a \$12 fee for everybody—because not everybody is the problem. My staffer, Bobbi-Ann, took that course, the Respect in Sport course. She's a volunteer. She's an assistant coach—Delhi minor hockey. She said there is great information there. She feels it should be free, and then maybe there wouldn't be so much resistance to this course.

Again, as we deliberate on how best to continue on with Bill 85—the daughter, the son of Bill 65—we can look at other jurisdictions. There is a lot of other advice out there. I actually wish I had more time.

Back in, well, it would be May 2012, the UK government, under the Minister for Civil Society—I think that was Mr. Hurd—put together a policy. It was titled Promoting Social Action: Encouraging and Enabling People to Play a More Active Part in Society. I think this is what we're trying to do here, or at least trying to forestall some of the problems or the decline of people partaking in civil society.

I have a list of recommendations—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to do things just a slightly different way today. I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery the recipients of the

Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You jumped the gun, because I'm going to call upon the Attorney General to introduce our special guests for the honour that's being bestowed.

I regretfully tell our other visitors that you can be here to observe, but you cannot participate in any way, shape or form. You have to refrain from making any kind of noise or any demonstration. I appreciate that.

So I will turn to the Attorney General to introduce our honoured guests.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Alors, ça me fait plaisir de vous présenter les récipiendaires aujourd'hui, the recipients of the 2014 Victim Services Awards of Distinction: Josée Bibeau, Melissa Graham-MacDonald, Lynn Zimmer and Mary Waters from Peterborough; Tammy Bullock from New Lowell; Cristina and André Duchesneau and Julie VandenAkke from Kingston; Roseanna Hudson from Thunder Bay; Michele Liotta from Aurora; Sandy Milne and Johanne Morency from Ottawa; Steve Oliver from Lindsay; Margaret Schreurs from Orillia; David Swerdfeger from Amherstview; Gregg Thomson from Oakville; Stephen Tooshkenig from Wallaceburg—welcome; Carol Barkwell from Oshawa; Jeanne Charlebois from Hawkesbury; and Lisa Oegema from Renfrew county.

Congratulations to all of you for your achievements, and welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): By way of assisting, I will make sure that everyone has an opportunity to introduce their guests because of the size of this particular group. But we will be reminded that we just introduce our guests.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to introduce Stephen Tooshkenig, a constituent visiting from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. He was being awarded an Attorney General's Victim Services Award of Distinction. Stephen is the youth coordinator of the newly developed Bkejwanong Youth Facility of Walpole Island First Nation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome my guest today, Alice Funke from Pundits' Guide. She's been here many times. Welcome from everyone.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I was very proud this morning. We have four individuals from Peterborough who were recipients of the Attorney General's 2014 Victim Services Awards: Josée Bibeau, Melissa Graham-MacDonald, Mary Waters and, of course, Lynn Zimmer, the very distinguished executive director of the YWCA in Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Enci Dhanoo-singh, as well as Ryan Edgar, who are receiving the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Page Isabella O'Brien has visiting with us today her mother and father: her mother, Angela Ceccato, and her father, Robert O'Brien. They're

here to see young Isabella at work, and we're pleased to welcome them to the assembly.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know that Lisa Oegema was formally introduced by the minister, but also joining us from victim services in Renfrew county is Faye Cassista, who is also a councillor in the region of Whitewater.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à deux personnes importantes de ma circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell : Jeanne Charlebois, présidente de la Maison Interlude House, et aussi, Céline Pelletier, la directrice exécutive. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, I also have some guests visiting from the riding of Brant: Karen and Bruce Williamson, some good friends of mine. We appreciate you being here today, visiting.

On behalf of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, visiting Jonah Opler: His uncle Lorne Opler is in the gallery today. Welcome to you as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, this is regarding the chief corporate services officer for the WSIB. According to the Ministry of Finance public sector salary disclosure for 2013, your chief of staff is being paid \$344,230. Premier, this salary is substantially more than your own and more than anyone's in your oversized cabinet. In fact, it is more than double the salary of President Barack Obama's chief of staff, who earns about \$170,000.

More than the outrageous salary itself, Premier, my question has to do with the sneaky way in which your office has tried to hide this salary from Ontario taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not acceptable. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Premier, why is the WSIB paying the salary for your political staff, and why can't I find the name of Tom Teahen on the sunshine list for your office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scandal number seven.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Warning number one. I couldn't resist.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite knows that the number of employees in my office who are on the sunshine list is down. It's 10; that's down from 15 in the former Premier's office. My chief of staff, Tom Teahen, earns an annual salary in the Premier's office of \$304,000.

His compensation for working in the Premier's office from mid-February to the end of last year was \$271,282. The remaining amount consists of compensation earned while he worked at the WSIB before moving to the Premier's office. His salary is in line with other chiefs of staff from former Premiers, and I know that the member opposite actually knows that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, I can't find the name "Tom Teahen" on the sunshine list, but it is there plain as day on the list of the top donors to the Ontario Liberal Party.

The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act makes Ontario's public sector more open to taxpayers and requires organizations that receive public funding, such as the Premier's office, to disclose annually the names, positions and salaries of employees paid \$100,000 or more. Premier, your office has gone to great lengths to ensure that the bloated salary that you are paying your friend, your chief of staff and your Liberal Party donor, Mr. Teahen, did not become public. Not only is his name excluded from the sunshine list, but his name is excluded from the list titled "Individuals seconded to ministries from public sector organizations." Premier, why are you trying to hide the fact that your chief of staff is paid more than any other provincial chief of staff in Canada?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Start the clock, please.

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Premier's office reimbursed the WSIB for the salary that the member opposite is talking about. That's the normal process for secondments. Mr. Teahen, my chief of staff, is on a secondment from the WSIB, so he is on the sunshine list. So that's just not accurate.

It we look at the salary that he is being paid, it pretty much is in line with former chiefs of staff. Guy Giorno's salary: In 2002, he was paid, if we adjust it to today's dollars, \$291,180. Ernie Eves's former chief of staff Steven Pengelly earned \$277,801 in 2003. So in fact, what we are paying the chief of staff is in my office is line with other chiefs of staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier. In 2007 Mr. Teahen was earning less than \$100,000 a year as a ministry staffer. In 2009, he made \$144,000 as the chief of staff at education. In 2010, he switched to the WSIB and pulled in \$191,000. In 2011, that went up to \$253,000. And in 2013, another raise, all the way up to \$344,000 per year.

Premier, we know you are in the midst of a month-long spending spree that will increase government spending by nearly \$6 billion, and we know you've given Mr. Teahen over \$200,000 in salary increases over four years. Premier, is there a salary guideline for ministry chiefs of staff, and can you confirm if Mr. Teahen's salary levels

fit within the guideline? Is that why you are skirting the rules and keeping him on the books at the WSIB?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find this a little odd—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, in case you didn't hear me—I find it a little odd that I'm actually asking the members of the person putting the question to tone it down, because I was having a hard time hearing the question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need editorials.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, my chief of staff is on secondment from the WSIB. His salary is in line with former chiefs of staff, including former Conservatives. He is on the sunshine list. He has taken on increased responsibilities since he came into this job.

As I said before, there are five fewer people in my office who are on the sunshine list than under the previous Premier's office.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not exactly sure where the music is coming from, but it's going to stop.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Throw them out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to tell the minister responsible for seniors, as I do often, I will be the judge.

So let's bring it down.

Finish please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say that I understand that this question is in line with the opposition's desire to drag the names of people who are working very, very hard through the mud. I take full responsibility for answering questions on my actions and on the government's actions, but I think that this is beneath the member opposite.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, our review of your budget-leaking team documents shows no evidence that you are addressing the growing problems in our health care system. Last year, you cut \$60 million out of physiotherapy services, as well as cuts to cataract surgeries. Many hospitals have had to close beds and operating rooms. You have also cut more than 1,000 registered nurse positions in our hospitals.

Between 2009 and 2012, 13 of Ontario's 14 CCACs gave their CEOs salary increases of more than 30%. This was in direct violation of the broader public sector salary freeze.

Minister, will you tell us today if the budget will include any solutions to fix the growing problems in our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will leave the finance minister to speak about what is in the budget. What I can tell you is that we are undergoing a transformation in our health care system that is showing remarkable results for the people of this province. We have far more people—thousands more people—getting access to the home care they need.

Our last budget was not an easy budget for hospitals, it was not an easy budget for parts of our health care sector, but we did that so we could invest more in home care and more in community care.

The Ontario Hospital Association supports our transformation initiative even though it means difficult decisions for hospitals, and when it comes to nurses, I will happily contrast our success with yours: 20,500 more nurses working in Ontario today than were 10 years ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the minister, through you, that this so-called transformation is certainly not going in the right direction. The top 15 executives at CCACs in Ontario were paid nearly \$4 million last year.

What would \$4 million get us? For starters, \$4 million would fund over 320,000 hours of front-line care. It would fund over 42,000 one-on-one physiotherapy sessions for seniors. It would also pay for 70 full-time new nurses. It would also fund much-needed cataract surgeries for our seniors.

Minister, will you commit to funding front-line care instead of funding CEOs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's maybe time to look at what the PC plan for health care is in this province. I can tell you that they can—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Burlington, the member from Cambridge, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Let's do this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland; I just don't think shouting people down is the right thing to do.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the PC plan for health care is risky, it is reckless and it is the wrong plan. It is clearly the wrong plan.

Let's take a little walk down memory lane: When you were in office, you fired health care workers, you closed hospitals, we had the worst wait times in the country, and now you're playing the same old game of slash and burn. You want to fire 4,000 front-line health care workers by eliminating our CCACs. Those are the people who make sure our seniors get the care they need in their own homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would certainly be happy to put our health care plan up against what you have. You're cutting and slashing yourselves.

Minister, there are so many urgent problems that you're not even looking at in our health care—

Mr. Grant Crack: What about Montfort hospital?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is close enough for me to see him as well as hear him.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North is not helpful either.

Please ask.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Let's look at what's actually happening under your system. We've got 19,000 seniors in hospitals waiting because they have nowhere to go; they have no long-term care to go to and they have no home care services. We have thousands of people who can't get access to needed cancer drugs because you will fund IV cancer drugs but won't fund oral cancer drugs. We have seniors in home care who aren't getting more than a bath a week. We have people in long—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to get you to listen. The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, come to order. The member from Sudbury, come to order. The member—oh, jeez. Next time.

Please.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You're actually making cuts across the board without even coming to grips with the bigger problems in our health care system. Will you deal with this in the budget or not?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will continue to invest in the community when it comes to our health care system because that's how we're getting people out of hospital and into the homes. It's a lot better now than it was, but we are not finished this journey. We acknowledge that there are still too many people in long-term care who don't need to be; there are still too many people in hospital and they don't need to be. That's why we're investing in home care. That's what we are all about.

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We went from the longest wait times in the country to the shortest wait times in the country. We went to a health care system where it was impossible to find a primary care doctor to one where, in many communities, doctors are now advertising for patients.

We have come a long, long way. I will happily, happily put our record against their record any day of the week.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Government Services insisted that he knew nothing about an internal investigation conducted by the Ministry of Government Services. Was the Premier briefed on the investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, we have made it clear when we learned about investigations. We made it clear when we learned about the allegations. We have done everything in our power to work with and co-operate with the people who have been asking questions about the relocation of the gas plants. We have changed the rules around the retention of documents. We have opened up the process.

As the member knows, we've been very clear about when we learned about the allegations. We learned about them when they came into the public realm.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Premier, perhaps, tell us who was briefed on that internal investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the leader of the third party can ask whatever question she wants, but considering the fact that we went over this yesterday, I would have thought we might have heard some policy questions.

But to tell her again, the fact that the Ministry of Government Services co-operated with the Ontario Provincial Police is something that is outlined in the document that was there in the court. As I indicated yesterday, I had a discussion with my deputy minister of the day, a very brief discussion, where he spoke about the fact—it was a matter of public record—that there was an OPP investigation and they were in contact with the OPP. Did I want to be briefed in any way? I said absolutely not. I did not want to have any discussions, with myself or my staff, and the ministry respected that.

The work that went on by MGS is outlined to an extent in the document before the court, which is now a public document.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: Was anyone in the Premier's office briefed on the internal investigation in any way?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I reference the court document, which talks about some of the assistance that the OPP received from the Ministry of Government Services. It was made clear to my deputy that this was to be done independent of myself or my political staff.

Again, I think we have to stress that this investigation is entirely independent. I think it is now a matter of public record that OPP investigators have been working with a federal crown attorney from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada to ensure its independence.

We have heard from the OPP in front of the committee, and they have reminded us that the best way to deal with an OPP investigation if you're a politician is to get out of the way, allow the OPP to do their work and respect their independence and also their privacy as they undertake this work.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Last November, the Premier's office scheduled

a visit from the OPP anti-rackets branch. When most people hear the police want to search their offices, they ask why. Did the Premier or her staff ask any questions about what was being investigated?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just say again what the Minister of Government Services and House leader has said: This is an independent investigation. It seems that the leader of the third party is trying to suggest that I should have inserted myself at some point into the investigation. That would have been inappropriate. That is not what a Premier should do. It is not what I should have done. It is not what I did. I have not inserted myself. It is an independent investigation. We need to let the OPP do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The OPP allege that three staff in the Premier's office had their computer hard drives wiped. They also allege that the House leader's chief of staff had her computer wiped. Is the Premier asserting that for well over a year, not one of these people who she works with daily ever raised this issue with her?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, let's go back to first principles. The OPP made an application to the court, which was made public. We determined that there is an OPP investigation, well under way, that is focused on one individual—unproven allegations—the former chief of staff to the Premier. I think the advice that we've gotten from the OPP is that we allow them to undertake their work. What the leader of the NDP seems to be confusing is that the fact that the OPP was looking into this matter in general has been on the public record.

I quoted yesterday from an article from last June. Commissioner Lewis appeared in front of the justice committee. It has been common knowledge that the OPP was looking, in general, into this. It was approximately two weeks ago that we were giving more information through this court document.

But again, Mr. Speaker, the advice we've had is to stay out of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government conducted an internal investigation, but we're told that the Premier doesn't know what it found. The OPP searched the Premier's office, but supposedly the Premier didn't even ask what they were looking for.

People stuck paying the bills for this mess haven't forgotten the Liberal record when it comes to this scandal. Liberals initially claimed it was going to cost \$40 million. Now we know it's \$1.1 billion.

The Premier claims she wasn't involved in the decision, but then it turns out that she's the one who signed the cabinet document approving the deal.

Does the Premier think that people will believe she knew absolutely nothing about any of this investigation?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened very, very carefully to what the leader of the New Democratic Party said, and quite frankly I find it shocking. She seems to be suggesting that the government should be directing the Ontario Provincial Police and that the government should somehow be involving itself in an OPP investigation. I'm not sure how she plans to run her party, but over on this side of the House, we respect the independence of the Ontario Provincial Police.

When there's an OPP investigation going on, we, first of all, co-operate fully, but second of all we get out of the way and allow them to undertake their work. As the investigator reminded us in committee the other day, interference by politicians, the type of interference that we're seeing today through question period, could, in fact, jeopardize that investigation. The prudent course is to allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm hearing some heckling that I'm not impressed with, and it will stop.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. I received an email yesterday afternoon, and I want to put it on the record on behalf of the pilots flying for our air ambulance service out of the Moosonee base. It reads as follows:

"This email is being forwarded to you on behalf of the pilots in Moosonee. The bottom line is that the helicopter that Ornge is planning to send to Moosonee for the operational helicopter is basically the oldest Sikorsky 76 in the world, with the least amount of automation.

"This, after the only helicopter fatality in 35 years occurred in Moosonee and Ornge promised to do everything to make our lives safer, yet the bottom line is, they are sending this machine because it is the cheapest to operate. Help us make the ministry wake up that Ornge can't operate aviation."

Speaker, this appeal is coming from the front-line pilots of our air ambulance service, whose lives are once again being put at risk by the decision-making at Ornge. On behalf of those pilots, I want to ask the minister: Will she stand with these pilots and stop this wrong-headed decision by Ornge that will put our pilots in harm's way?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question from the member. I think if he turned to his left and spoke to a pilot, he will learn that no planes can be flown unless they are airworthy and unless they are properly accredited and approved by Transport Canada.

I think it might be helpful if we just took a look at some of the remarkable claims the member opposite has

made. He once claimed that tail rotors of helicopters, like the ones Ornge operates, sometimes fall off. He was wrong. He read a directive that did not apply to Ornge helicopters.

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He said, “An Ornge-contracted ... Pilatus ... aircraft crash-landed at the Timmins airport....” That was wrong, and Ornge’s front-line staff wrote a letter affirming that the statement was completely misrepresenting our operation and especially the level of safety we work so hard to maintain.

The member said there was no reference in the performance agreement to either critical-care or advanced-care paramedics. The response—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister without portfolio will come to order, and the member from Halton will come to order. I think it’s the second time for both of you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The pilots that the minister is putting at risk are not impressed with her response today. I am reading her an email from pilots at the Moosonee base who are concerned about the antiquated equipment that Ornge is asking them to fly, and I’m asking this minister—the next time one of those aircraft crashes, she has heard the warning from the pilots. What they don’t want to hear is more sympathy from this minister, because she has had an opportunity to step in, stop a wrong-headed decision and make sure that our pilots and our paramedics have safe equipment to fly in to deliver the kind of air ambulance service that they should be delivering to the people of this province. Will she stand with those pilots, will she stand with those paramedics, do what’s right and stop that wrong-headed decision?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows that we have strong safety standards in Canada and at Ornge.

But let’s go on, Speaker. The member claims that Ornge hid the salaries of 79 employees. In fact, they were posted publicly, online.

He questioned the competence of hard-working public servants and claimed nobody in the ministry with oversight of Ornge has experience in land or air ambulance. He’s wrong; in fact, there are 10 people in management or senior management roles with that kind of experience.

He claimed that the front lines are saying that things are going from bad to worse. In fact, we had Brandon Doneff at SCOPA. He said that things at Ornge under the new leadership are definitely better.

He claimed that two Transport Canada inspection reports suggested that Ornge should not be in the aviation business—wrong again. The truth is, Transport Canada would have withdrawn Ornge’s operating certificate if they thought that was the case. They didn’t; on the contrary, they approved Ornge’s corrective action plan in May 2013.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. The gas plant committee hearings had to be cancelled this morning because witnesses aren’t coming forward. David Livingston, Peter Faist and Laura Miller’s assistant were not responsive or not available. Does the Liberal government think that senior Liberals should be avoiding the committee?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I’ve stated here in the House before—

Hon. James J. Bradley: No policy questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Hon. Mario Sergio: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for seniors is warned. Anyone else?

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated in the House before, the government has co-operated fully with the justice committee. The Premier has been there several times, the Minister of Energy, myself—even I appeared in front of it. I would encourage everyone to co-operate with the committee.

Committees have the power and the responsibility to call witnesses. There is a process they go through, and as you and members of this House are aware, there are steps they can take if they are trying to access a witness who, for one reason or another, is not wanting to appear. That is up to the work of the committee. There is a process and there are steps that are taken by committees, and I think we should respect that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it is my hope indeed that the government does support the work of the committee.

New Democrats are taking steps to get a Speaker’s warrant, if needed, to ensure that key Liberal witnesses show up at committee. We hope it doesn’t come to that. Are the Liberals going to stand in the way of that, or will they support using all tools available to ensure that senior Liberals come before committee?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the committee right now is putting together—is dealing with witness lists. There are steps that it takes, and every member of this House is aware of that. But we have been very, very co-operative on this side of the House. The Premier has gone several times, the Minister of Energy—Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you about my appearance in front of the committee. It was one of the most surreal experiences of my life. I was questioned, I believe for an hour, about a document that I had never seen before and a meeting that I never went to. I’m not making it up. It was a little bit like the twilight zone, but I was very happy to go in front of it and answer questions about things that I was not involved with.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains

de 2015, the honourable Michael Chan, Minister, this week, the Premier, you, I and Minister Coteau helped launch TO2015's call for 20,000 volunteers. Yesterday, we had a great launch function in my own riding of Etobicoke North, and hundreds of kids were delighted and diverted to have you in my riding.

As Minister Coteau has stated before, it's National Volunteer Week here in Canada, and we couldn't be more proud of Ontarians who dedicate so much of their time to volunteerism. I know that my own residents in Etobicoke North are excited to have these opportunities to volunteer in the largest multi-sport event in Canadian history.

Speaker, my question is this: Will the minister please elaborate on the many opportunities for Canadians to volunteer, to give back and to pay it forward?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for asking the question. Yes, we had a great time yesterday at a school in his riding. That was a great launch of National Volunteer Week.

The 2015 games will foster volunteerism in Ontario, especially among young people age 16 and up. It will leave a legacy of skilled leaders from a variety of backgrounds and age groups who are socially involved and committed to their communities.

Opportunities will be available throughout southern Ontario, stretching from Welland to Minden Hills, from Hamilton to Oshawa, where competitions will take place. All volunteers will receive valuable skills training, work experience and tokens of appreciation to recognize their role in the Toronto 2015 games. In fact, as of 9 a.m. this morning, over 6,100 people have already signed up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, for the detailed update. It strikes me that this is like the volunteer measures act, the largest call for volunteers in Canadian peacetime history. I can see in my own community of Etobicoke North the interest to volunteer for the games despite potentially detracting remarks from the party opposite.

Another benefit the parties opposite may be overlooking is the announcements that you have made this year, Minister Chan, along with Minister Duguid, that help OSAP recipients and trade apprentices take advantage of opportunities that the games bring.

Speaker, would the minister please elaborate on the many benefits of hosting an event of this magnitude?

Hon. Michael Chan: All Ontarians stand to benefit from the opportunities the games will bring next year. Amongst them are people like Tyrone Solomon from North York, who is helping to build the Pan Am aquatics centre. He says, "When I tell my family where I am working, they are so proud of me."

Janet Laurence from Hamilton, who will be volunteering in her third world-class athletic event, says, "It's an experience you can't put a dollar amount on."

Even Olympic hockey gold medallist Natalie Spooner has—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Michael Chan: Natalie said, "By volunteering myself for TO2015, I'm saying I believe what these games can do for all of us."

I encourage all members in this House to sign up.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Premier, the gas plant scandal documents prove that you signed the go-ahead for Project Vapour. This started a process that wrote a blank cheque in order to reach a deal. This moved it from the public court system into private arbitration, where the proceedings and the results would be kept secret.

In order to reach an agreement, the Liberals waived all of their defences and gave up any limits on damages. Then, you put most of the cost on the hydro bill, while only talking publicly about the much smaller taxpayer portion.

Premier, how can you continue to pretend that you knew nothing of the gas plant cancellations when it was you and you alone who started the entire process?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that's the biggest stretch we've heard in this discussion so far. The member opposite knows full well that I was part of a cabinet that made decisions—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: She'll be calling her lawyer now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will come to order, and he's now warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, three times.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows that I was part of a cabinet that made a decision based on a commitment that we had made to relocate the gas plants, a commitment that had been made by all parties. We acted on that commitment. We went ahead and we relocated those gas plants.

I have said repeatedly that there were processes that should have been better. We have worked to change those processes. We've put in place new rules in terms of siting this kind of infrastructure. We've got new rules in terms of document retention. That is the work we've been engaged in for the last year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I'm quite surprised that you're questioning the results of the Auditor General, which I just read in my last question, but what I outlined

is exactly why David Livingston is alleged to have had the hard drives in the Premier's office wiped.

The Liberals stayed in power because of the manipulation of the gas plants. You're the Premier today because the last one quit in disgrace over the manipulation of the gas plants. Many of your cabinet ministers stood in this House and said one thing about the gas plants, knowing the complete opposite to be true, and seven of them have since bailed. But you think of your own self-interest so much that you can no longer see right from wrong.

Premier, how about this: Why don't you name the members of your transition team who had interaction with David Livingston between January 26 and February—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear, because we've been going through this for a number of days now. The member opposite is perpetuating false allegations and false accusations against me because he thinks it's good politics. That is what is going on.

I believe that he knows we opened up the process. He knows that I have said what I know. He knows that I appeared before the committee. He knows that we have co-operated with an independent investigation. I believe that this kind of questioning actually insults the office that he holds, and I would ask him to stop it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. David Zimmer: You're lying, Vic. You're lying. He's lying, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And no other comment need be made.

New question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Families in London have had enough bad news. Over the past year, London has lost 7,200 jobs, our unemployment rate has climbed above 8% and the usage of the food bank continues to rise.

The London Food Bank announced today that a new approach is needed. They serve almost 3,600 families every month and simply stated that they are just stretched to the limit.

It's clear to everyone that the status quo approach the Liberals have taken just doesn't work. When will the Premier admit that she is failing families in London because her government has no clue how to create jobs in southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but I have to disagree fundamentally with the member from London. I think, in fact, what the food bank has actually said is considerably different than how you've characterized it.

But what I want to say about the unemployment rate and jobs in London is, in fact, the reality is considerably different than what you've represented it as. About a year ago, the unemployment rate was unacceptably high. It was over 9%. It has actually come down by more than 1% since that period of time. We've had very important announcements: Incredible companies like Natra, which is a European chocolate maker, has decided to make London its North American headquarters. The single largest export deal in the history of this country has come out of London recently, with thousands of jobs that are going to be protected and new jobs created as a result.

So in fact, the news is quite good for London. I don't know why the member opposite continues to denigrate the hard work that is going on to help that important part of the province recover.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Everyone in London—except this government—seems to know how bad it has gotten. Our unemployment rate has climbed four months in a row, and 12,000 people have simply lost hope and dropped out of the workforce altogether since the Premier took office. That is the Liberal government's record.

The Premier refuses to admit that her policies aren't working, and it's forcing families to fall further and further behind. Speaker, how many more jobs need to be lost before the Premier gets the message and provides real help for small businesses to create jobs in London?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The list is long in terms of businesses—including, importantly, food processing facilities—that are opening in London and the London area. It's partly due to the hard work that is being done by those local communities and their local economic development corporations.

In fact, I had the opportunity, the honour, just in the last couple of weeks to speak and outline the province's job plan to the economic development corporation and about 150 other business leaders, community leaders and municipal leaders in London—just to talk to them and engage them in the progress that they are making. They've got an important and growing high-tech and digital sector which exists in London as well. Brose, an important facility, just announced in the last few weeks.

I'll just say, in March 2013, the unemployment rate in London was 9.6%, while today, in fact, it's 8.2%. It's still higher than it needs to be, but it shows the progress that has been made just over the past 12 months. They're moving in the right direction, and I wish that member would stop talking down London and the hard work that her economic development community is doing to create—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.
New question.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, I often hear from concerned parents. They want to ensure that their children are getting the best possible education and have the greatest opportunity to succeed.

Research has shown that an important part of a child's ability to learn is having access to a nutritious diet. Children who eat regular, healthy meals are better participants in the classroom, and I know that, in Ontario, we are committed to providing our students with the best possible learning environment.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to provide students with access to nutritious meals?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for the question and for the many discussions that we have had with respect to the importance of health and education for our children.

Mr. Speaker, it's evident that our government is committed to ensuring that every child across this province has the opportunity to succeed. We know that nutrition plays a role for success in school and keeping children healthy. That is why, earlier this week, I was proud to announce that we are expanding our Student Nutrition Program. We are investing an additional \$32 million over the next three years to provide students across the province with nutritious snacks or breakfast. This is expected to create 340 new breakfast and morning meal programs, and benefit an additional 56,000 students. I have spoken with teachers, principals and students about the progress. They all report positive outcomes, including better concentration in school.

This investment is just one more way our government is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Parents in my community will be pleased to hear that our government is expanding the Student Nutrition Program. I know that in my riding, the Toronto Foundation for Student Success operates a number of nutrition programs. I also know that they do a terrific job of providing student nutrition across the city of Toronto. I'm happy to hear that we are providing additional funding to organizations like theirs to expand the services they currently provide. The Student Nutrition Program is a great way to ensure that students from across the province can maintain a nutritious diet.

1120

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please inform the House how this new investment will allow the

program to become more responsive to the needs of our communities?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Absolutely, and again, thanks for the continuation.

There are currently 4,200 student nutrition programs across the province. These programs provide nutritious breakfasts, snacks and lunches to over 695,000 students across the province. We recognize that the cost of food continues to grow, so this enhancement in funding will help our communities with those food costs as well. We will also be expanding the program for First Nations schools on reserve, which we've heard we need to do.

Expanding this program is part of our plan to support our children and our future, because we know that students who eat a nutritious breakfast are more likely to attend school and achieve better academic results. We'll continue to invest in our children and youth to ensure success, opportunities and healthy living.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, as you are no doubt aware, cider sales are experiencing huge growth in Ontario, having grown by an astonishing 60% in the last two years, very similar to the growth that we've seen in the Ontario craft brewers.

Ontario Craft Cider Association members use 100% Ontario-grown apples and pears, which ensures both a quality product and more economic opportunities for our Ontario growers. Minister, will you level the playing field to ensure that Ontario cider can be sold to restaurants and bars with no LCBO surcharge on direct deliveries, as is the case for Ontario craft beer?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am very proud of the tremendous work done by our local growers and local craft brewers, including our cider. I know that one of our colleagues, the then Minister of Agriculture—where are you now? The Minister of—well, Ted McMeekin—I know we're not supposed to name names—was a big advocate for cider sales.

I truly appreciate the tremendous work being done by the community: locally grown, as is our VQA, as is our barley, as is so much of the industry throughout Ontario, to support growing in Ontario, processing in Ontario and selling in Ontario. And certainly through the LCBO, much of that is being promoted and protected, especially for our craft brewers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, I'm proud of our Ontario ciders too, but you need to actually show some leadership and do something that they need to level the playing field. It is an issue of fairness and one where you could show some real leadership.

Ontario cider is an industry that is thriving in many parts of Ontario: Dufferin—Caledon, Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Haldimand—Norfolk, Hamilton East—Stoney

Creek, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Huron—Bruce, Niagara Falls, Oak Ridges—Markham—

Mr. Todd Smith: Prince Edward county.

Ms. Sylvia Jones:—Prince Edward county, Toronto Centre, Simcoe—Grey, not to mention the many regions across Ontario where apples and pears are grown.

People are looking to you for action. When cider producers sell and deliver their products directly to restaurants, the LCBO takes a 40% cut. Will you take action and remove it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: On this side of the House, we certainly value and promote locally grown opportunities. It is why we have increased access through our express stores, most recently. It is why we are doing more to promote our VQAs, our craft breweries and our cider sales.

I appreciate the question. I really do, because I think it's essential that we do everything we can to promote our industry. We want to make certain that our local growers are getting the maximum benefit afforded to them, which they wouldn't have had, Mr. Speaker, had it not been for the proactive nature that the LCBO has been doing to promote the industry. We'll continue to work with them. I appreciate the question and I will look into it, certainly.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

The racetracks at Leamington, Sarnia and Dresden will receive fewer race dates than they requested for the 2014 season. As you know, the Lakeshore group has been working to keep racing alive in Essex county since the demise of Windsor Raceway and the loss of 2,000 jobs. The cut in dates from 60 to 45 is yet another indication that this government has no intention of supporting the horse racing industry in rural Ontario.

Will the Liberal government actually come up with a long-term plan for our horse racing industry instead of issuing self-congratulatory press releases as more race dates are being cut?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question but, again, I think the member opposite knows that we have been working to make sure that we have a sustainable horse racing industry in the province. We've been working with all of the tracks. We're putting in \$500 million over the next five years. And quite apart from not having an interest in the industry, we are also making sure that there is extra money for the breeders, because we know that breeders were very concerned about the sustainability of their industry as well.

We will continue to work with the tracks—the tracks all over the province, not just the tracks in particular urban areas, but all of the tracks. We want them to have a season, but most of all, we want the horse racing industry to be sustainable. We want it not to be under a plan that was not transparent. I think the member opposite knows that the SART Program was not transparent. It was not

accountable. We have changed that. We've got a sustainable horse racing industry, and that has been our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I'm sure other governments could have made it transparent instead of cancelling it.

This government keeps chipping away at the horse racing industry. Businesses need stability, and they need to start planning now for the upcoming race season. The misguided cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program has had a huge negative impact on the horse racing industry for the past two years. Instead of reversing its decision, this government is choosing to go ahead by cutting more race dates.

Will this government ensure that all racetracks across Ontario get the support they need in time for the upcoming racing season?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the member opposite is asking whether we will bring back a program that really was not transparent and was not accountable in any way, then, no, we will not do that, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the three tracks—the Hiawatha, Leamington and Dresden tracks—are working together to come up with a plan. This is good news. That's what we want to have happen. We want those collaborations to happen so that there can be a sustainable path forward.

That's what we're encouraging, that negotiation is ongoing, and I think the member opposite knows that. I don't really think that he thinks we should go back to a system that was not accountable for the tax dollars. I don't think he believes that is the case.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Attorney General. As the minister knows, assisting victims of crime when they need it the most has always been a priority for our government, and I know it is an important issue for the people of Scarborough—Guildwood.

Each year, our government invests over \$100 million in victim services and programs through the Victims' Justice Fund and the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I also understand that the people of Ontario have access to a broad range of services to address their needs as victims of crime. Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please elaborate on these important services our government offers to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member from Scarborough—Guildwood. I know that she's a great supporter. I was with her; we opened a French-speaking shelter for French-speaking people in her riding, and she is great.

Our government has been a leader in upholding victims' rights and providing improved access to a number of services across the province. Victims of crime in Ontario have access to important programs such as the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program and the Victim Support Line, all of which provide immediate on-site support

services to victims of crime to information and assistance during the criminal court process.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of exceptional services our government has made available to victims of crime to assist them in their time of need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Attorney General, for your answer and for your support of the francophone community in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

The people of Scarborough–Guildwood would be relieved to hear of the important services our government is providing to victims of crime. I also understand that this morning, we recognized a group of outstanding individuals involved in the front-line care of victims. The Victim Services Awards of Distinction is an annual ceremony in which the Attorney General presents awards to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the provision of victim services in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell us more about these leaders in victim services?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed this morning with these people who work day in and day out to use their own experience to help those who are in similar situations. I am pleased to hear of the important services our government is providing for victims of crime.

This morning, we had these wonderful 19 recipients. They had been nominated for this award because they raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario, volunteered countless hours of their time and delivered exceptional services in innovative ways to better serve victims of crime.

I want to thank all of them and their families who helped them to be able to work as volunteers in their own communities. They gave great commitment—tireless work and commitment, and it is because of their work that Ontario is a leader in victims' service delivery.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I've raised the issue with you before about the ongoing funding challenges facing the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital. I explained that, as per a key outcome of their 2012 sustainability review, they were promised gap funding for three consecutive years while the new health-based allocation model is rolled out.

Minister, it is now April. The fiscal year has come to an end. The new funding model hasn't been fully implemented. The hospital hasn't received this funding, and without it, they face a \$1.8-million deficit and will be forced to drop a core service. Last year, there were 476 expectant mothers who gave birth at this hospital, 1,071 ski accidents that got treated in the emergency room and 1,193 hip and knee orthopaedic surgeries.

My question is quite simple: Without this funding, which of these core services should the hospital no longer provide?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier today, we are in the middle of a transformation of health care spending. As I acknowledged earlier today, it is a difficult time for hospitals as they accommodate, as they rethink their services, as we make sense out of how hospitals are funded.

You as a former health minister would well know that before we introduced our new funding reform for hospitals, it was impossible to explain why the budget for one hospital was what it was relative to another. We're bringing some sanity, actually, to how we fund hospitals. For some hospitals, that means an increase in budget. For others, it means a lower budget. We are implementing this over time. Hospitals are well aware of what their allocations will be under the new funding model, and we are working with all the hospitals to do this in a way that protects patient care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Certainly through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, I think we have indicated many times on this side that, for the most part, we agree with the new HBAM funding model. But the point here is that Collingwood General and Marine Hospital was given a letter from your ministry indicating that it could get three years of gap funding, and so it budgeted accordingly. It didn't get its funding.

I got a letter from you suddenly in December of last year, after I perpetually raised this, saying that the LHIN has asked for you to make a decision on this second year of gap funding and that you're reviewing it. We heard from the LHIN recently that you're going to renege on that promise. They've already gone to the four mayors in the Collingwood area—Wasaga Beach and Clearview and throughout the area—and they want to come down and see you because of a broken promise.

It's a relatively small amount of money. The hospital budget is based on your government's commitment, and they are going to cut patching people up on the ski hill, births or hip and knee surgeries; that's what they're telling the community. It'll be on your head.

What is it? What are they supposed to cut in order to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I would be happy to meet with them if that's what they'd like to do, and we will go over what's happening at that particular hospital.

I do think, though, that as I look at what hospitals are doing, I find it a little bit hard to believe that they would no longer care for people with broken legs. I think our hospitals are far more responsible than that. In fact, they have an obligation to provide service.

I would be happy to look into it, happy to meet with the community. I can assure you that we will do what we can, everything we can do, to make sure that services are maintained in the appropriate way.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Labour. The new Minister of Labour has said that he supports fair wages for all workers. Are we to assume that this includes servers in restaurants?

After a long winter, it's already patio season, and it's the busiest time of the year for servers. I am sure they look forward to earning a little bit more money, but due to the Liberal foot-dragging on the bill, their bosses are still entitled to steal their tips. Bill 49 will stop this practice. Will the new Minister of Labour, who says he is a friend to workers, insist this bill be called for third reading?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I want to thank my honourable colleague for the important question. When Ontarians tip, I think—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, if you'd take your seat, I'll tell you to stop.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: — any one of us in this chamber, when they tip, they want 100% of that tip to go to staff.

In the summer of 2012, the ministry held an employment standards blitz, and it protected vulnerable workers and inspected workplaces in a variety of sectors. That included the restaurant sector. Anybody who does have a question about their rights is encouraged to contact the employment standards information centre.

But as you know, Bill 49 has been to committee. It has been referred back to the Legislature for third reading with all-party support. My understanding is that my predecessor has worked with the gentleman, and we'll continue to work with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, it is up to the Liberal government to call the bills, including this one that they say they support. The ministry supports this bill. The former minister supports this bill. The Premier has said she supports the bill. The whole caucus over there says they support the bill. Bill 49 will protect thousands of Ontario workers who rely on tips to lift them out of poverty.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Paul Miller: They're doing the same on Bill 69—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will be enough. I didn't get quiet for you to start to heckle—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And anyone else to respond.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Michael Prue: Don't let another patio season go by without extending protection to the people who need it. Will this new minister commit today to join Quebec, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick to make it illegal for business owners to steal their employees' tips?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I do want to thank the member from Beaches—East York for reintroducing this private member's bill. I think it has been an example of co-operation in the House.

I've had the opportunity already to speak with numerous stakeholders in the service sector. It has allowed me to learn a lot better what this industry is like and where the unfair practices are actually taking place. It was determined during the process that certain improvements needed to be made to this bill, and they were. We also needed to take into account unionized workplaces, obviously, where collective agreements exist.

I want to thank both opposition parties for their support. It's my hope, sincerely, that this bill moves forward. It should.

FLOODING

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. With the arrival of spring and a noticeable rise in temperature, we can all spend more time outdoors enjoying the good weather. However, at this time of the year, we must be aware of the possibility of spring flooding.

In Durham region, I've had the good fortune to be elected to both the board and the executive of CLOCA, the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. This organization works to monitor on an ongoing basis weather forecasts and watershed conditions at locations across the watershed. These measurements, weather forecasts and radar information on temperature and rainfall predictions, along with historical data, are all compiled to develop a flood forecast.

The work at Durham region's CLOCA is meant to reduce risk to life and damage to property by providing the public with advanced notice, information and advice so that they can respond to potential flooding emergencies.

Can the minister please share with this House the initiatives that the Ministry of Natural Resources is moving on to ensure that all communities in Ontario are prepared for potential flooding?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Ajax—Pickering for raising this important issue. As the member mentioned, our province experienced a severe flood last spring. In fact, it was the worst flood on record since April 1928, so a very significant event.

With respect to monitoring, our government is responsible, and our ministry is responsible for flood warning and forecasting. We have a Surface Water Monitoring Centre that is engaged in this activity 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Daily assessments for flood hazard potential are performed at this site. It includes a river watch program that collects and analyzes stream flow and water level data, a weather watch system that collects and analyzes weather data, as well as watershed conditions that include measuring snowpack depth, and running models with respect to this risk. Our ministry will continue to ensure that we're advising Ontarians appropriately and in a timely fashion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Toronto–Danforth on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to correct my record.

Earlier, I posed a question to the Minister of Government Services. I said David Livingston, Peter Faist and Laura Miller's assistant were not responsive or not available to the committee. I should have added Laura Miller to that list.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's actually not correcting the record; that just simply means you've added somebody, and that's not appropriate.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I noticed in the public gallery just behind me, Professor Robert O'Brien, who was the chair of the department of political science when I received my PhD. His daughter is a page here in the this Legislature. Welcome to the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that's going to invite an awful lot of comments, but we will not be making them.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: In the visitor's gallery today is Emily Hedges. She's my director of communications, and after many years of loyal service, she's moving on today. It's her last day on the job here at Queen's Park. We're going to miss her.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I wanted to acknowledge that today we were joined by a member from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, Mr. Bhagat S. Taggar, and his guest from England, Ravi Bhakri, who is a city councillor who joined us today.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Walker assumes ballot item number 55 and Mr. Smith assumes ballot item number 12.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to recognize the town of Minto for an outstanding new initiative that has been undertaken by council and staff.

On March 18, Minto began the development of a program to offset the town's carbon footprint. The town currently uses about 130 litres of fuel each year. Using the carbon-offset formula, it is estimated that 950 trees would be needed to offset that carbon footprint.

Council and staff are taking a proactive approach by developing a plan to implement a one-cent-per-litre transfer from the town fuel budget. This money will go towards Minto's Trees for Farms initiative and will be reserved for tree-planting programs.

Staff and councillors who submit mileage will also be encouraged to voluntarily donate one cent per kilometre to the Trees for Farms fund. This plan has the potential to raise between \$1,300 and \$1,600 a year.

This is an exciting project, and I am proud to offer my support.

I would like to recognize two other environmental leaders who serve as an inspiration for this initiative. Thank you to the township of Mapleton for its Trees for Mapleton program and to the county of Wellington for its Green Legacy Programme.

SAFE DIGGING

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to come before the House today to remind members that April is Dig Safe Month.

Dig Safe is dedicated to improving safety and reducing damage to underground facilities by raising awareness of safe digging practices through local events across this province.

In 2011, along with my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton, I was proud to introduce Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario. The purpose of Bill 8 was to establish Ontario One Call Ltd. as a not-for-profit, single point of contract for all utility location services in Ontario.

In June 2012, the province passed Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, allowing Ontarians to simply call one number for all underground utility locates.

After complete implementation of related regulations in June this year, Ontario will become the leading Canadian province for safe digging practices.

I would like to remind the public and all members that, except in emergency situations, requests for locates should be made at least one week in advance. Locate requests can be completed online at www.on1call.com or by calling 1-800-400-2255.

MARKHAM SKATING CLUB

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This year, we in Markham are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Markham Skating Club. Since 1964, the Markham Skating Club, or the MSC as it is known locally, has been dedicated to developing skaters of all ages and skill levels.

For their 50th anniversary, the club hosted a 50 and Fabulous Ice Show from April 4 to 6. The show featured

icons from each decade over the last 50 years, with themes such as Hollywood starlets and the Mickey Mouse Club.

Today, the club has more than 250 members and 12 professional coaches, eight of whom have trained with the MSC at some point in their careers. In fact, Sandra Churchill, the current board president, was one of the club's original skaters in 1965, and her daughter Meaghan is now skating with MSC at the advanced level.

However, the MSC offers more than just figure skating. Adults of all levels can take skating lessons, and their power skating program has alumni such as NHL star and Markham resident Jeff Skinner, who is the youngest player in the four major North American sports to play in an All-Star Game and was the NHL Rookie of the Year in 2011.

Congratulations to the Markham Skating Club on their 50th anniversary, and may there be many more years to come.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to pick up where I left off yesterday in response to the Minister of Education's statement on anti-bullying, to which I had the opportunity to respond on what I believe was a very successful International Day of Pink. But anyone who devotes their time and effort to eradicating bullying knows that the day after a day of action is just as important. It's for that reason that I'm glad to take some time to recognize anyone who keeps up the fight against abusive language and behaviour 365 days a year.

Autumn Fernandes is the founder and choreographer of the ONE Movement performance company based in Cambridge, Ontario. The ONE Movement program travels to schools around Waterloo region and the province to inspire children and teens through movement. Fernandes, who was bullied growing up, tells students that confronting bullying head-on is the best course of action. She says that "students will leave the performance with energy, enthusiasm and a sense of belonging." She adds that kids play a vital role in stopping the cycle at the source and conveying a positive message for generations to come.

I applaud Autumn's efforts in using her passion and work ethic to bring about a safer school experience for kids right across the province of Ontario. The Cambridge Chamber of Commerce has recognized Autumn as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year. On behalf of the people of Cambridge and members of the Ontario Legislature, I want to congratulate Autumn on her tremendous achievement.

DIABETES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Canada is in the midst of a diabetes epidemic. I take this opportunity, as a physician and parliamentarian, to personally thank the Globe and Mail, the Canadian Diabetes Association and medical colleagues Drs. Subodh Verma, Bernie Zinman and Richard Gilbert.

First, I'd like to salute, thank and recognize the Globe and Mail, and in particular my effervescent editor, Tralee Pearce, Globe Life editor Kathryn Hayward, and health editor Sarah MacWhirter. I thank them for allowing me to pen pieces that I hope will contribute to the Canadian conversation, alert us to important health trends, and signal shifts and recalibrations of the medical mindset. It has been said that medicine is the most scientific art and the most artistic science. I am pleased to report to this House that the Globe's approach to health coverage mobilizes this wisdom.

I also thank the Canadian Diabetes Association for the diabetes charter, a diabetes bill of rights.

I quote now from my own article in today's Globe:

"Managing the coming diabetes epidemic won't be easy. Right now, there are three million Canadians with diabetes. Six million more are pre-diabetic.... There's a whole generation of adolescents who study, play and socialize by computer—a digital world in which physical activity is unnecessary...."

The diabetes charter is a bill of rights outlining "the duties and responsibilities of patients, health care providers, governments, schools and the public."

These are all important pieces of the evolving diabetes puzzle.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: In 1994, 20 years ago, the Ontario Legislature passed the amendment to the Highway Traffic Act which allowed our volunteer firefighters to use a flashing green light on their cars or trucks when responding to an emergency. This was the very first private member's bill of mine that was passed into law.

Working together two decades ago to build support, I remember the strong support of Wellington county fire chiefs like Clifford's Dennis Kaufman and Doug Smith of Puslinch township.

Today, we are joined in the House by Wayne Nie, who is chair of the board of directors of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario. Welcome, Wayne, and thank you very much for coming here today.

All of our province's firefighters deserve our special appreciation, but our volunteer firefighters are the day-to-day heroes of small-town Ontario. We can never say thanks often enough, and that's why I've raised many of their concerns in the House over the years. Even after 20 years, more needs to be done to raise public awareness of volunteer firefighters' flashing green lights, especially for our urban residents who may be visiting rural Ontario. Many rural municipalities have erected road signs to inform motorists, but the province could do much more to help remind drivers that a flashing green light on a car or truck means that a firefighter is on the way to an emergency and minutes can mean life or death for a family like yours, so make way.

I urge the Ministers of Community Safety and Transportation to work together to develop a strategy to continue to raise public awareness to ensure that our fire-

fighters can respond to emergencies swiftly and safely, fulfilling their important calling and mission and saving lives.

JACK O'NEIL

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to celebrate National Volunteer Week. Many volunteer recognition events have been held in the Welland riding this week to recognize the important work of volunteers. From seniors' residences like Rapelje Lodge, Woodlands of Sunset and Northland Pointe, to hospitals, Family and Children's Services, March of Dimes and Red Cross, volunteers are crucial in providing support and keeping these vital community institutions running.

1310

I'd like to make special mention of a well-known Port Colborne resident: Jack O'Neil, president of Friends Over 55 and a community activist for many years. He volunteered at Port Colborne hospital for decades, arranged community Christmas dinners, and is advocating for seniors at every turn. He spearheaded a campaign to raise awareness and push for government funding for low-income seniors. He canvassed with a petition that I brought to this House—it's an issue he continues to raise. He's now fighting to protect seniors from the Enbridge 40% gas rate hike. He knows seniors are already living on tight budgets and are unable to afford such drastic increases.

My office has drafted a petition and Jack will, I'm sure, come back with 20,000 signatures. He has consistently reached out to my office on behalf of seniors in need, and on this fight and so many others, and I'm proud to help him in any way. He's a shining example of the impact of people getting involved and volunteering in communities.

Thank you, Jack, for all your generous work.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, the month of May, which is soon approaching, is Jewish Heritage Month in the province of Ontario, as unanimously passed in this Legislature two years ago. We're now entering the third year for Jewish Heritage Month, and I just want to invite all MPPs from Brantford to Hamilton, Niagara Falls to Windsor and Etobicoke to celebrate the Jewish roots in your ridings.

The Jewish community has been a part of Ontario's fabric for over 200 years—200 years of history. They fought in the War of 1812, they fought in the First World War and Second World War, and they helped build many of our cities. The Jewish community is rich in history and tradition. They are rich in the medical field, philanthropy, and in constructing this great province from every brick up to the sky.

Jewish Heritage Month is now under the auspices of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the Centre for

Israel and Jewish Affairs. They're also going to have the annual Walk with Israel down by the lakefront.

I invite all members to celebrate 200 years of Jewish history in this province and to please do something in your ridings to recognize a great number of your community who come from this 200-year history of Jewish contributions to this great province.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY PATROLLERS

Mr. Bill Walker: As a former safety patrol at Amabel Hepworth Central Public School, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize some 900 school bus safety patrollers who volunteer on over 335 bus routes in Grey and Bruce counties.

These grade 6 and grade 8 girls and boys tend to some 14,000 students from 52 elementary schools in the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board and Bluewater District School Board, ensuring that each one of them gets to and from school safely. They help their peers or younger students employ safe crossing practices, and they assist by watching for traffic and signalling to cross when it is safe to do so. They assist bus drivers by acting as an extra pair of eyes on the bus, modelling good behaviour, and remain on guard in case of emergencies, such as taking charge and getting help on the way if the driver becomes incapacitated.

Every day, they do their job with the utmost care and respect, and as a result, their duties are a valuable contribution to the major reduction in pedestrian fatalities and injuries in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it was a little disheartening to hear that the efforts of these valuable partners in education are often overlooked by Queen's Park, so today I am pleased we're changing that by making a first statement in recognition of these young leaders and the challenging job they perform.

On behalf of all parents in Bruce and Grey who place their trust and care into your hands every day, my colleague Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson and I extend our heartfelt thanks to you for being true leaders amongst your peers.

We also extend our appreciation to Mr. Steve Lustig, general manager of the transportation and purchasing consortium of Grey Bruce, for helping to plan local events to ensure these kids are recognized for their work and efforts.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAX FAIRNESS

FOR REALTORS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ FISCALE POUR LES COURTIERS EN VALEURS IMMOBILIÈRES

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd just like to welcome a number of visitors from the Ontario Real Estate Association, strong supporters of this bill—Tom Lebour, Ron Abraham, Johnmark Roberts, Don Kottick, Craig Homewood, Nita Kang, Andrew Wells, Robert Stanley, Matthew Thornton and Sylvia Pena—for joining us in the west members' gallery this morning.

The Tax Fairness for Realtors Act amends the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, to permit a brokerage to pay commission or other remuneration to a personal corporation of a broker or a salesperson that it employs.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 7 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize National Volunteer Week. Every year, we use this week to say thank you to the more than six million volunteers here in the beautiful province of Ontario who make their communities stronger. These dedicated men and women commit their generosity, effort, compassion and time to help build their local neighbourhoods. Volunteers change the world every day. They deserve our heartfelt thanks, recognition and support.

Speaker, our government is working to strengthen volunteerism here in Ontario. This month, we launched some important initiatives to advance that goal.

Yesterday, we kicked off Ontario's seventh annual ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge,

which runs from now until May 19. ChangeTheWorld connects young people with not-for-profit organizations in their communities, where they can volunteer to make a difference.

Since 2008, more than 100,000 students have volunteered hundreds of thousands of hours in their communities, gaining confidence in themselves, developing their talents and skills and expanding their personal networks. These young people are really changing the world.

This year, ChangeTheWorld is working with 23 volunteer centres across the province and engaging more than 33,000 young people. That's a record number.

Speaker, our government recognizes that the 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games present a unique opportunity to strengthen volunteerism. The 2015 games will rely on the commitment of some 20,000 volunteers.

To that end, we brought forward three initiatives that I'm sure will interest prospective volunteers. We're creating a certificate program to recognize the training and experience that people get volunteering, including those supporting the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games. This certificate will help volunteers compete in today's job market.

We will also be launching Ontario's new online volunteer gateway to support volunteer recruitment province-wide. This accessible gateway will provide a one-stop shop for up-to-date volunteer resources, tools and opportunities, including future large-scale events.

Finally, our government is encouraging students to volunteer for the games by waiving the Ontario Student Assistance Program—OSAP—pre-study contribution for new and returning college and university students, as well as extending the interest-free grace period for recent graduates who volunteer.

Speaker, volunteers change our world as mentors, board members, fundraisers, caregivers and in many other ways, so we're working to improve the volunteer experience. Last month, we began a provincial round table to have discussions with our stakeholders across the province for our first-ever volunteer strategy. This strategy is intended to be our plan to strengthen volunteerism here in Ontario.

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Lastly, during National Volunteer Week, we recognize outstanding community services through various important award programs. The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, since the inception, have been presented to more than 180,000 Ontarians.

I just got back from the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism, recognizing individuals, businesses and other organizations. I'll say, they were such an exceptional group of people that were the recipients of this year's award—and also, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

I want to thank members who have already taken part in these Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies that began on March 19, and I urge all members to recognize their community volunteers this week and during the Volunteer Services Awards ceremonies that continue until June 26.

I just want to say thank you to all of the six million volunteers here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to respond and mark National Volunteer Week, which takes place this year from April 6 to 12. We are all lucky to live in a country where civic pride and volunteerism are commonplace throughout many communities across Ontario. National Volunteer Week is a time to give thanks and show our appreciation to the 13.3 million volunteers across our country who put the needs of others above themselves and give back to their friends, their neighbours and their community.

Often the most cherished annual events in our communities are organized and carried out by dozens of dedicated volunteers.

Speaker, I'm sure you're no different than most of us. Almost without exception, every event that we attend on the weekend in our communities is hosted, organized, and facilitated by volunteers. Think about your local Santa Claus parade, or, considering the time of year, the Easter egg hunts that people look forward to in our communities. Then there are events like the Rotary Ribfest that comes through town, or an annual blues and jazz festival. Events like these form healthy communities and are always enjoyed by local families and residents. Behind all of these fantastic events, there are always countless volunteers putting in many, many hours, and often for no reason other than to help give back and make their community better.

Volunteers are behind these initiatives that make our communities unique. The great thing about the local Lions clubs, the Legions, the Optimists, the Kinsmen and the Rotary is that they are, at their heart, comprised of volunteers from our community. You know that a large part of what makes events like the ones I mentioned above so special is that they are always unique, no matter where you attend.

The value of the many volunteers who pitch in across Canada cannot be understated. Indeed, that is one of the reasons why I introduced my private member's bill, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, which would make it easier to volunteer for multiple organizations in Ontario. For all the important things that volunteers do on a daily basis, it is important that we give back to them as well and help ensure that volunteering is easier to do in Ontario.

This week, I was also proud to attend the town of Caledon's volunteer citizenship awards, where many local residents were given awards for their extensive commitment to their community.

As we pay tribute to our volunteers and acknowledge the importance of volunteerism in our communities, I must say that I am proud that it was a Progressive Conservative government that introduced the program that requires high school students to obtain 40 hours of volunteer service before graduation. I believe that this has proven to be an excellent initiative that has introduced

thousands of young Ontarians to the value of volunteering.

When it comes to volunteers and the tireless work that they do, I often like to use this quote: "Whether you volunteer your money or your time, it is valuable, it is important and it is appreciated." National Volunteer Week is the perfect time to thank volunteers for all they do for us in our communities.

I'd encourage those listening at home to go online at www.volunteer.ca and consider participating in the Volunt-Hear hotline initiative to participate in a national conversation about volunteer recognition. This hotline is a toll-free number where people can leave a brief impact statement and say thank you to a volunteer.

For my part, I'd like to conclude by taking this opportunity on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, the PC caucus and the residents of Dufferin-Caledon to sincerely thank all of the wonderful volunteers across Ontario for everything they do. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my privilege and my honour to stand here today to talk about volunteer week. The community, no matter where you live, recognizes the value of volunteers—the people who live there and the things they do. It doesn't matter whether you're from East York or Dufferin-Caledon or Scarborough or Timmins; it doesn't matter at all where you're from. The people who live there recognize those who do, those who contribute and those who make our community a better place to live.

In my own community of Beaches-East York, we have two awards ceremonies, one in the Beach and one in East York, every year. We try to pick a volunteer, somebody who has made a significant contribution. In East York we have what is called the Agnes Macphail Award, which is given out yearly to a person who epitomizes Agnes Macphail's contribution to Canadian life, whether that be helping women or the cause of poverty or those who find themselves incarcerated. We have an award in the Beach called the citizen of the year award. We give that award out every year to the person in the Beach who is elected by their peers as the person who has made the best contribution as a volunteer in their lifetime up to that point.

Without volunteers, I wonder what many of our institutions that we hold so dear would do. How would the hospitals operate without those volunteers who answer the telephone, who direct patients and family to the right rooms, the candystripers, if they are still called that—I don't know—inside the hospital and the thousands and thousands of things they do?

We look at our sporting teams. I don't know how they would operate at all. I had the honour to go to the Little Stanley Cup in East York this past weekend. There were all the volunteers, who had given up hundreds if not thousands of hours in that same year for every single one of those kids and every one of those teams, to make sure it came off without a hitch. Those same volunteers in another couple of weeks will go out and start the baseball teams as well, and the soccer teams and everything else that they do—amazing, amazing, selfless people.

I think about the community festivals that take place in my riding and everywhere else around this entire, wonderful province and the volunteers who come out to those to make sure they happen. Whether it's Canada Day or the jazz festival, the Easter parade, it doesn't really matter; it doesn't matter at all what it is, there are volunteers there doing what they can to help bring a sense of cohesion to the people who live there.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about Willis Blair. I attended his funeral yesterday. I hope to make a member's statement on it later with much more information, but there was a man who was a former mayor of East York—actually, the second mayor of East York. What he is remembered best for even today isn't his mayoral duties, although he was an excellent mayor; he's remembered best for his volunteer activities after he left that post. He worked in the Kiwanis, he worked in the hospital, he worked at the Westview Presbyterian Church. He was a fixture in all of those and he gave all 90 years of his life.

I think about the young people, by the thousands in our community, who help the poor, who help the disadvantaged, who help the children, who are there in the morning serving breakfast for the children's breakfast programs at the schools to make sure that every kid has an opportunity to learn, because you can't learn if you have an empty stomach.

I think about Community Centre 55 in my riding, which ran the Beaches Spring Sprint this past week, which I also attended, in order to talk about people getting sufficient exercise, but also to raise funds for worthy causes in our community.

Without our volunteers, it would be a much poorer place. Without our volunteers, the communities that we all know and cherish would not be the same kind of communities. It is those people who are the heart and soul of everything that we are and everything that we hope to be. We need to salute them. We need to do much more to recognize them.

I know that we have this day—I am thankful that the minister and my opposition colleague have stood up and spoken about this and I'm happy for the opportunity myself—but each of us in our own way, must salute our volunteers, not once, not twice, but a hundred times every year for the work that they do and the fact that they, and they alone, make our community the place that it is and that we're all proud of.

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PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for improved post-stroke physiotherapy and eligibility.

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of

20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

“Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become productive citizens;

“Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

“Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

“Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of these treatment practices.”

TEACHERS

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Hire the best teachers and repeal regulation 274.

“Whereas Ontario schoolchildren need the best education; and

“Whereas good teachers are key to the excellence of education; and

“Whereas regulation 274 unfairly requires principals to hire teachers differently now by prioritizing seniority over quality and suitability; and

“Whereas Ontario's four million parents and grandparents want the best teachers for their children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario repeal regulation 274, Hiring Practices.”

I affix my name and I give this petition to Divya.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

As I am in favour of this, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Bani.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai le plaisir d'introduire une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario pour une école secondaire francophone de quartier, de la 7^e à la 12^e année d'études. Je vais lire seulement la dernière partie, qui dit :

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Que le ministre de l'Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7^e à la 12^e année d'études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n'auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d'une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je vais y affixer ma signature et la donner à Urooj.

GREENBELT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenora Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenora Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Callista.

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Given the nature of this petition, was this stamped by the Clerks as being acceptable? I find it hard to believe that it was, given the nature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will consult with the table. We'll carry on and get back to you.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, beginning on January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from the WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I agree with this, Speaker, and hand it to page Justin.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a rather lengthy petition. I have read this into the record several times. I'm just going to read the "be it resolved."

"That the Minister of Education intervene to locate an underutilized secondary school building in the neighbourhood of Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York and Leslieville that may be sold to or shared with both French school boards (public and Catholic) so that each may open their respective French secondary school (grades 7-12) by September 2014 and so that French students no longer must choose between travelling great distances to attend a French secondary school or giving up their French education in favour of a local English school and so that they may have the same benefit as their English counterparts, the right to attend a local secondary school in their neighbourhood."

I'm in agreement and will send it with page Urooj.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

I'll rule on the member's previous point of order. The petition that was read has been ruled to be in order previously, but the particular petition read today was not stamped. I would encourage members to realize that they must have their petitions stamped by the table before they are read.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across ... Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature, and give it to page Bani.

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ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce a petition, on behalf of Geri Sutts and her daughter Trish Sullivan-Crew, from my riding of Essex. It has amassed a number of signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers...."

Mr. Speaker, I will affix my signature to the petition and deliver it, through Caroline, to the Clerks' desk.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. John O'Toole: This is from my riding of Durham and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has approved a 40% increase in Enbridge Gas rates effective April 1, 2014;

"Whereas the government of Premier Kathleen Wynne has not taken action to ensure affordability of natural gas in Ontario;

"Whereas the provincial government has contributed to higher costs of natural gas by its own policy on purchasing natural gas for electricity generating stations required to supplement wind and solar power;

"Whereas an increase averaging \$400 in annual gas bills is a hardship for all Ontarians, but especially seniors on fixed pensions and families and individuals of modest means;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the provincial government recognize that heat and hydro are essential commodities for Ontario; and

"We, the undersigned, further ask that the provincial government immediately investigate the 40% increase, take action to ensure temporary increases caused by an exceptionally cold winter do not become permanent, and also ensure affordability of natural gas for consumers for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Zohaib, one of the new pages here.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows—and it has been stamped by the Clerks' table:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are subsidizing the export of cheap electricity to other jurisdictions; and

"Whereas more than \$1 billion has been wasted by the government in the cancellation of natural gas plants for purely partisan reasons; and

"Whereas there have been unchecked increases in the pay and bonuses of hydro executives;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act as follows:

"(1) Stop the \$1-billion annual subsidy of electricity exports to jurisdictions like New York and Michigan by taking Ontario hydro sales out of the hands of speculative energy traders.

"(2) Cap executive pay and cut down on waste and duplication by merging Ontario's hydro agencies.

"(3) Stop private power giveaways and have Ontario's Auditor General conduct an immediate review of all

private power contracts in the wake of the \$1-billion gas plant scandal.”

I’m in agreement, will sign my signature, and send it with page Megan.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I sign this and pass it on to page Uroog.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas youth mental health in the province of Ontario is rising at an alarming rate. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence. Research shows that early identification leads to improved outcomes;

“Whereas pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, studies suggest 15% to 21% of children and youth, approximately 467,000 to 654,000 children and youth in Ontario, have at least one mental health disorder. The consequences can affect children

and youth now and into adulthood, their families/care-givers, schools, communities, employers and the province as a whole;

“Whereas the 2010 Ontario report by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*, made specific recommendations that would address the growing mental health and addiction crisis among youth in the province, but no further concrete steps have been taken;

“Whereas waiting lists for help are at a crisis level and our schools do not have the resources to deal with the growing incidents of bullying, addiction, anxiety, depression and suicide. Education and awareness is critical to remove the stigma;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to prioritize funding and resources for our schools and communities to help our youth with mental health and addiction illnesses and the resulting consequences.”

I will give this to page Eli to present to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should establish a select committee to review Ontario’s winter road maintenance contracts with a view at improving winter road conditions before the 2015 winter season.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I’m pleased to introduce motion 70, which reads, “that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should establish a select committee to review Ontario’s winter road maintenance contracts with a view at improving winter road conditions before the 2015 winter season.”

This winter, the northwest in particular has experienced the worst winter in memory in terms of unsafe travelling on highways across our region. I have heard concerns like tragic accidents, jackknifed tractor-trailers and the inability of emergency vehicles and crews to safely arrive on-scene. What’s worse is that these conditions weren’t only experienced at the time of or shortly after a winter storm, but these subpar conditions have been experienced consistently since the region’s first snowfall on November 18. The only break in the treacherous conditions people living in the northwest have received was when spring hit the region and the snow receded.

That said, the winter hasn’t been all that extraordinary in terms of weather; the inadequate maintenance of most

of our highways by all but one contractor, however, has been. Yet the poor conditions persisted despite the repeated pleas from northerners and MPPs. It hasn't seemed to matter that the Minister of Transportation has been alerted to the problem conditions being experienced across the north or that he has been given numerous suggested solutions, because he has still failed to take any meaningful action short of funding a few more plows and making mention of considering bringing some privatized services in-house sometime in the future. But with no dates in sight, northerners aren't confident that change will come in advance of next winter.

The bottom line is that reforms need to be made, and they need to be made soon, in advance of next winter, so that we don't see history repeat itself. As I mentioned, my offices have been flooded with hundreds, if not thousands, of emails, letters, calls, tweets and Facebook messages about the poor conditions across Kenora-Rainy River alone.

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There is a wealth of information and expertise that needs to be considered when making reforms to these private contracts, and I believe that a group outside of the ministry is needed to conduct this review. A select committee will be able to listen to the insights provided by people across the province as well as experts working in the field across Ontario and in other jurisdictions that have similar climates and weather patterns.

Just to give people in this House and people watching a sense of the issues that northerners have been facing this year and some of the issues that may be discussed by the select committee, we've heard a range of issues dealing with contractors: Again, not all contractors, but the vast majority of contractors in northwestern Ontario aren't fulfilling their contractual obligations.

We have heard from people that contractors aren't providing up-to-date information on road conditions, and that, instead of being able to go to the MTO before starting their journey, people across northwestern Ontario have actually had to contact and listen to the media—CKDR is a radio station that people have had to pay attention to, to see if there are actually road closures. We've heard that contractors aren't maintaining roads to the standards that are set out in the contract.

I wanted to highlight three highways in particular: Highway 17, which is the Trans-Canada Highway that runs through my riding; Highway 105, which connects the Trans-Canada through Ear Falls up to Red Lake; and Highway 502, which connects Dryden to Fort Frances.

On Highway 17, the plowing frequency should be every 2.2 hours, and 16 hours after a winter event, we should be seeing bare pavement. But in Kenora-Rainy River, weeks after a snowfall, we're still seeing that the highway is covered with snow and is still icy.

In terms of Highway 105, the plowing frequency varies between 3.3 hours north of Ear Falls and 5.5 hours south of Ear Falls. After 24 hours, that highway is supposed to be restored to bare pavement. But the conditions have been so bad that we've actually seen a

Facebook group pop up with about 2,000 people from the area who have joined. The Facebook group is called "Highway 105. Residents for better roads."

When it comes to Highway 502, the plowing frequency there should be every 10 hours, and after 24 hours, that highway shouldn't necessarily be restored to bare pavement, but should be restored to a snow-packed condition. Just to give you a sense of what a snow-packed condition is, there's a section of the contract that the Ministry of Transportation gave me, which defines a snow-packed condition as "a means achieved when the driving surface of the road has been plowed and is free of loose snow, potholes, rutting, washboard and slippery areas."

The folks at home who are watching this are going to say, "That does not describe Highway 502 at any point since November 18 of last year." We have seen washboard; we have seen glare ice. Transports that travel down that section of road are driving down the centre lane just so they don't go into the ditch. We also transport schoolchildren down that road. There's basically a suburb of Dryden that's down that road, and people rely on being transported over that section of highway to get to work, to school, to medical appointments and to get groceries each and every single day.

In terms of some of the conditions we may want to consider at committee that fall squarely on the shoulders of the government, there are problems with the contracts themselves: with patrolling, enforcement, penalties and even the clarity of the contract.

Patrolling: We found that the patrol areas are far too large. I've heard from contractor employees who say that they are expected to cover areas that are so large that it is impossible for them to assess each section of the highway more than one or two times a day. We all know that weather does not follow such a rigid schedule of only appearing once or twice a day.

In terms of enforcement, the section of the contract called "Outcome target indicators" specifies that contractor logbooks, records, plans and actions that the contractor has taken will be the only indicators used to apply consequences of non-compliance. Underpinning this whole system, no matter what kind of fines and penalties the ministry has come up with for a contractor not complying, it's based on the honour system; it's based on the records that the contractor provides. I think that is something very serious that we have to look at, at the select committee level.

In terms of the penalties themselves, clearly they aren't strong enough to get action or to get some of the problem contractors to really pull up their socks and take the job seriously.

In terms of the clarity of the contract, the contract states that conditions need to be "addressed immediately by the contractor upon detection" or being made aware of an issue, yet there don't seem to be any minimum requirements that are associated with patrolling areas, or frequency.

The contractor is also only required to use—and this is in the contract—"all available resources to maintain the

highways as safe as possible throughout the winter and to reach the prescribed level of service as soon as possible after winter events have abated or ceased.”

Winter events are defined—and again, this is a quote from the contract—as “the time when snow or freezing rain stops falling on any portion of a route, when drifting ceases to cause accumulation on the road surface of the road or when frost is no longer creating a slippery condition.”

Based on that definition of what a winter event is, I’m assuming then that people in Kenora–Rainy River can expect our winter event to end in April, when the snow goes, because we’re always going to have drifting snow. We’re always going to have the accumulation of snow. We’re going to have frozen sections of highway, including bridges, which the minister mentions quite often.

Another problem that we should also be looking at is the highway classifications themselves. In northwestern Ontario, we don’t have a single class 1 highway, despite the Trans-Canada crossing the highway. Two highways in particular have been identified as having classifications that need to be upgraded. That’s Highway 502, as I mentioned—that snow-packed condition just doesn’t cut it—as well as Highway 105, because the standards don’t reflect the fact that for some communities, there is only one way in or out of the community. There needs to be a remoteness factor that’s considered as well as the amount of traffic that is on the highways.

I do think that privatization itself is another issue that should be considered. The director of the Manitoba Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation said that the reason why Manitoba decided not to privatize the delivery of their essential service is largely the result of an in-house evaluation that concluded that privatization would lower costs initially, but that it would ultimately be equally or more expensive than public highway maintenance.

We’re seeing this case in Ontario, where experts working for some of the large contractors in northwestern Ontario have suggested that the decision of contractors to not adequately maintain roads is intentional and that it is a means that they are using to leverage more money out of the provincial government. I think that it’s also a tactic that seems to be working, because we’ve heard from the minister, who has made statements in this House, that some of this inadequate maintenance has resulted in 52 plows and more crews being purchased, that are over and above the contract negotiations.

Of course, the most serious issue that we’ve got, that’s associated with poor highway maintenance, is the lack of safety for families, seniors and workers who travel our highways. This winter, we’ve seen serious collisions and crashes, including a 14-transport pileup where even emergency crews had difficulty accessing the collision site because the conditions were so bad. A first responder told me that the ambulance and fire trucks nearly went off the road, and even though the first responders had special gear, it wasn’t sufficient to enable them to respond quickly, and even while walking, the first respond-

ers had to literally inch their way to the scene from a quarter of a kilometre away, carrying the gear that they required to extract people from some of the wrecks.

Very unfortunately, we have also seen some fatalities. We know in this House that even one fatality is too many.

There are concerns for children being safely transported to and from school. I have a press release from the Northwestern Ontario Student Services Consortium, which is the board that does the transportation. It says, “During a routine ... stop on Highway 17 near Eagle River, a loaded school bus experienced a close call. The school bus was heading east and three vehicles travelling west were safely stopped and adhering to the flashing red lights.

“A fourth vehicle, also travelling west, could not safely stop and hit the ditch on the south side of the highway.” They go on to say that, fortunately, the school bus was not hit by the vehicle that hit the icy conditions and was not able to stop.

What I’m going to do is I’m going to pause here, and I will continue the rest of my speech—it was very difficult to condense all of the points I wanted to make, so I think I’ll continue it and share a little bit of it with my caucus colleagues.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I’m very happy to speak today about the winter highway maintenance. In northern Ontario, I’m sure they are experiencing many of the same things that I’ve seen in southern Ontario. A number of times, I’ve driven the highways in my riding, 417 and 401, and I’ve yet to see plows on the highway. My trip from Ottawa to home is about 45 minutes on the 417 if the weather is good, and not one time, looking at both sides of the highway, have I seen a plow. That’s much different than I’ve seen before.

I know that you just can’t have a storm in this country where you get two, three or four inches of snow an hour—when your circuit time is an hour and a half, you just can’t get around before there’s enough snow.

Of course, we’ve seen, I think, a hundred vehicles in the pileup at Gananoque this year; similar on the 400, north of Toronto, as well as near Belleville. It goes with a change in highways.

We had a meeting with the Ministry of Transportation. Before the meeting, we received a letter from the ministry showing that the number of plows in the eastern region had gone from 59 plows down to 32, as of April of last year. A new contract was signed by the MTO. That’s almost a 50%—45% or 46%—difference.

Then I come to the House and what do I hear? First of all, they blame it on Mike Harris. This is how far back—we can’t change results.

There is a new contract on 50% of the plows. It’s time that we look at the reason for it. It’s dangerous. I don’t know how many accidents we’ve had. I know this has been a bad winter, but I don’t have to go back very far, to

2008, when we had a much more severe winter and we didn't have the accidents we had this year.

Coming from eastern Ontario to Toronto, it's a real problem for me, because I don't know what the weather is going to be like. I just know that if it's a snowstorm, the highway is closed. That's just what we've seen numerous times this year.

We met with the contractors—well, first of all, they blamed it on Mike Harris; then they blamed it on the contractors, for not meeting the contract. We tried to meet with them. The next thing that happened is very typical of this government: They threatened them. They cancelled meetings with them and said they didn't want to talk to them because, “We talked to the PCs, we talked to the public.”

That's just the wrong attitude. I've seen that before in health care, where clinics are told that they're getting cuts but “We don't want to see it in the paper.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to stick to the motion that is in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: My point of the motion is, the contractors are being threatened. They're told not to release the terms of the contract; they're told not to talk to the public. But you can't get by the one fact that's there: Snowplows are 50% less than they were last year.

I don't think it takes much of an education to know that when you have severe storms in Canada, in Ontario, on a 400-series highway, if you're starting to get close to a foot of snow in the middle of the road, all that equals is 10, 15 or 20 cars in the ditch. As this goes on the highway, it easily gets up to—around Christmastime, I think it was around a thousand vehicles, so imagine the damage.

I saw the contracts. The contracts today are costing less than they were 10 years ago, if you can believe that. The cost of the contract per year is less than it was 10 years ago. You can imagine the inflation over that time period. Think of the damage that goes on when you have a thousand vehicles off the road—that's a lot of damage—in one event, millions of dollars, more than the cost of the savings we've seen.

I think it's time to stand up and make the changes required. There's lots of time to work with the contractors and get the snowplows up to the proper levels. Maybe 59 was too many, but 32 is not enough, and we've seen clear evidence of that.

Thank you, Speaker. I know there are other people who want to speak to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today I thought it was important that I read a constituent's letter into the record. His name is Rob Burns, and he lives in Wawa. He's a volunteer fire department individual. He talks about an accident that he reported to on November 20, 2011, where they were called to extract a passenger out of a vehicle.

It says, “On Sunday, November 20, 2011, we were called to a particularly sad car accident on Highway 17 south of Wawa. A 13-year-old boy lost his life....

“We were called ... to extricate the front seat passenger of a mid-sized SUV.

“While I was assisting with the removal on that side of the vehicle I noticed the extensive damage to the upper rear passenger area of the SUV. The blood smears and tissue made me think that a moose may have been involved in the collision.

“I was wrong.

“I noticed a blanket laying out against the guardrail about 30 feet from the vehicle ... with a shoe sticking out from under the blanket. I have been at a few fatal accident scenes,” so he knew what he was dealing with right away.

“The second part of the accident was ... another north-bound tractor-trailer that lost control while attempting to brake and stop. It ended up about 100 metres south of the accident, 30 metres from the highway completely jack-knifed. The driver later said that he just barely touched the brakes and the truck slid out of control.

“The point of this letter” to you, Michael, is that I want “to inform you of the sole reason this accident occurred.

“The deplorable condition of Highway 17—the Trans-Canada Highway—in your riding is what caused this accident and took that young boy's life.

“After speaking with the MTO representative on-scene, the Wawa MTO had elected not to use salt to clear the highway for this particular storm event. The attendant had told us that it was ‘too cold’ for salt to work.

“Most northern residents know that road salt is not very effective at temperatures below -20° or -25° Celsius.

“However, on this particular morning, the temperature was approximately -12° Celsius when I noticed the outside temperature in the morning before we got the call.

“Interestingly enough, after being at the scene for an hour or two, it became apparent that a salt truck had driven through and spread salt at the scene after it happened but before the fire department and ambulance arrived.

“I came to that conclusion because the salt pattern had driven around parked and broken vehicles.

“How nice of the MTO to assist us in walking on the highway to clean up such a devastating mess to the family involved.

“Too bad they hadn't done their job properly that morning to prevent such a totally preventable car accident.

“I have lived in Wawa for about 12 years now. I grew up in Toronto and return frequently to visit friends and family. The difference between winter maintenance there and here is laughable.

“We regularly get forecasted snow events over 20 centimetres and I have never seen any pre-treatment of the Trans-Canada Highway 17. I have a unique perspective about territorial road service differences.

“The fact that the MTO and our new service provider ‘Transfield’ (an Australian company) failed to use salt to correct the state of the road boggles my mind.

“Even one of the attending OPP officers at the scene told us that he phoned the MTO at 9 a.m. that morning

and advised that the road condition was very, very slippery and quite unacceptable.

"Nothing was done to correct this situation, and an innocent youth was killed two and a half hours later.

"As drivers we never have any control over what other drivers do, but you (the politicians) do.

"You decide the policies. The policies govern the road policies, rules and road maintenance workers and actions. The workers either put sand and salt on the road or they don't. You politicians made a bad decision on this policy, and this young boy's death rests squarely in your hands.

"You need to come up with a better policy for the conditions of different types of winter road maintenance, and consistent criteria for use of salt, sand, plows or any combination of these.

"I have spoken to the MTO people and they tell me that the climate is different and budgets are different," and all this is all—I won't use his term, but BS. "The climate doesn't change over 10 metres on Highway 17, and the budget should make sense and promote safe highways instead of saving dollars. As an Ontarian, I pay a huge amount of fuel tax, and there seems to even be an unwritten 'northern Ontario fuel tax' most days too, although you guys don't get a cut of that, it all goes to the big oil companies. Use a bigger fraction of that money to keep the roadways safe!

"Another MTO employee informed me that Highway 17 in this area is a class 2 highway. It is the Trans-Canada Highway! It is the 401 of northern Ontario!

"This is the main reason for its poor condition most of the winter. You guys should get your acts together and fix this problem. It is a simple problem and a very important lifeline to the people of this area. It should be a class 1 highway. So what if gas costs three cents more a litre? We're already paying 15 cents more than in southern Ontario....

1410

"Mike et al, I thank you for your time and hope that your aides have enough sense to give this to you to read yourself. I am also carbon copying the Minister of Transportation, their critic, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and their critic, and the Premier.

"Please think about this letter and this preventable accident whenever you are driving your family around on our class 2 highways, and be sure to drive safe when in northern Ontario. The Wawa fire department will always be available to help.

"Sincerely yours

"Rob Burns

"Senior firefighter."

I thank him for sharing his story with us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill.

First off, I do want to introduce my wife, if I may use this time. My wife, Patty, is here visiting us today, for her, I think, second or third appearance in my two and a half years here.

Mr. Bill Walker: It seems like the first every time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, it seems like the first. We're really pleased to have her here today, and I want to say thanks to the dozen MPPs who joined us for lunch today. It made for a little bit of fun.

I will speak in support of the member from Kenora—Rainy River's bill. However, I do want to say that our MPP from Leeds—Grenville has already successfully moved a motion in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to direct the Auditor General to review the delivery of winter road maintenance. The Auditor General is to complete her review by the end of the year. So while I support this bill, I can tell you, Speaker, how important it is that we take the Auditor General's results to heart before we move on any thoughts about what needs to be fixed or what doesn't.

The auditor will tell us a couple of things, and contrary to what the member from Kenora—Rainy River said, the current condition of the roads has absolutely nothing to do with privatization. They are going to study two things: the contract standards and the service levels. Those are the areas that need to be addressed. The contract standards have not changed since outsourcing. Based on the class of highway, the MTO sets the time frame in which the road must be cleared and meet bare pavement standards. Speaker, I repeat: The standards have not changed since outsourcing, so blaming it on that is a little premature, I would think, and incorrect, according to what the auditor will look at.

Service levels, I think, are another important area. I can say that three winters ago, when I first was elected, the highway conditions were deplorable. We had almost a dozen fatalities in northern Ontario, and I asked for the coroner to be involved. Sadly, that was not something that this Legislature wanted to see happen, but I can tell you, this past year alone, my wife, Patty, and I went to Mattawa in my riding to go to the opening of a restaurant, Le Voyageur, and it was like taking your life in your hands. It was a dangerous drive for 45 miles to Mattawa. The snow had stopped. We were there for four hours in the lovely community of Mattawa, and on the drive back, the roads were even worse. Now, the snow had stopped for four hours. This is the kind of thing that we find deplorable.

A few weeks later, Patty and I went to Magnetawan for the cattle farmers' luncheon—we do get a lot of these eating opportunities, Speaker—and it was like taking your life in your hands to drive to Magnetawan down Highway 11 south. Again, the snow had stopped for hours. We were returning home, and it was deplorable conditions.

We went on a 30-city tour of Ontario since Christmas, and I was witness to that 72-car pileup in Napanee. The drive from Ottawa to Belleville was awful, the drive from Belleville to Kingston was worse, and the drive from Kingston into Cornwall was a very scary experience.

So while we do support this bill, we're really encouraged that our member from Leeds—Grenville was so successful in getting the Auditor General to look into this, and I thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's more than an honour to be able to speak today in support of my colleague regarding winter road maintenance; it's a duty, because in the north—and, I think, across the province, but specifically in the north—and since I've been elected, it has been a battle. When I first got elected, we had all kinds of complaints that roads were closed. Highway 11 through Timiskaming–Cochrane is the Trans-Canada Highway. When it's closed, the only way through the province is to get out of the province and go to Quebec. And we do that on a regular basis.

You wonder why. Some people blame it on privatization. I'm not sure. I'm looking forward to that audit. Some people say, "The contractors bid too low. They can't fulfill the contract. They can't fulfill the standards." But that begs the question, because it should be the due diligence of the Ministry of Transportation to make sure that the contracts bid for—that they have adequate provisions and adequate funds and adequate equipment to actually complete the contract. Likewise, if you bid for a government building and your bid comes in at half what your people know it's going to cost to build that building, alarm signs should rise.

There's a total disconnection between the police, who actually close the roads; the contractors; and the MTO. I will give you an example. Right outside my door, we have one of those big interactive signs on Highway 11. Down here, the 400 highway—you know, "Collectors moving slowly"? Ours usually says, "Drive with care." They will close the highway and it will still say, "Drive with care." It won't say, "Highway closed." The trucks will all be stuck on the highway for hours where there are no facilities, and it's already too late to take the cut-off to go to Quebec.

We have a community group called the Northern Safe Roads Coalition. We had a meeting with the police. We're still trying to get a meeting with the local MTO, but I've had several meetings with MTO. They've been good to deal with, my local guys. We asked, "Just for starters, why don't you change that sign?" The police told us, "We don't have access to the sign. We can't change it." "Okay. So why don't the contractors change the sign?" "We don't have access to the sign. The MTO has access to the sign, and we can never get them on the phone."

It might be a half-million-dollar sign on a part of Highway 11 that is closed at least 10 times a year, and it's absolutely useless because there's no coordination. I'm glad the minister is here to hear this, because it's absolutely deplorable.

We have people in towns like Temagami. They have a little volunteer brigade, because when trucks and cars are stopped there for hours—we all have our little blanket pack now, but they have no place to go to the bathroom. They have a little volunteer brigade to help people.

This committee—along with the Auditor General. We have to find a way, because this isn't a little issue. Yesterday, we spent a lot of time and the minister brought a

bill forward on safer roads, on bicycling. I commend him for it. But a big part of safer roads is actually having them clean in the winter. I've lived in northern Ontario my whole life. It hasn't been like that all the time.

One thing: In our riding, if you want to know how safe the roads are, you go on Facebook to the Northern Safe Roads Coalition. They will tell you if the road is closed. I've had it several times that you call 511, "Roads are fine," and they're actually closed. That is a huge problem.

Those are the things that we have to look at, and I'm very proud to be able to stand beside my colleague and support her motion.

Debate deemed adjourned.

JIM FLAHERTY

Mr. John O'Toole: A point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order for the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's with deep regret today that—I'm a friend of Jim Flaherty, and it has just been announced that he is deceased. On behalf of the Conservative caucus and Tim Hudak, we extend our deepest regrets and deepest sympathy and support to Christine and his family and thank him dearly for all he has contributed. At 64 years of age—it's too young to lose such a wonderful person and leader. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to join the member for Durham. Jim was a friend. As many of you know, Jaime Watt and I were business partners, and Jaime was very close.

He was one of Canada's most remarkable public servants, one of our greatest finance ministers, someone who has contributed to the life of Canadians and Ontarians, someone I had huge respect for and had the pleasure to seek his advice from time to time.

To Christine and to the family, this is a terrible loss for all of us.

On behalf of the Liberal Party and the Premier, we express our deepest and most profound condolences to all of you, especially to our friends in the party opposite, to Christine and to her family.

I think that Jim provides a role model for so many of us in public service. I'm sure we'll have time to reflect on his remarkable contributions to our country. Thank you. God bless.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, Minister.

Point of order, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just before I ask for a moment of silence in recognition of the passing of Mr. Flaherty. I didn't know him well. When I was a reporter covering provincial elections or throne speeches, or when visiting ministers would come through, I really enjoyed spending time with Mr. Flaherty. As you know, his personality was effervescent. To me, he was always very friendly, very approachable. I was saddened last year, or whenever it

was, when we first heard that he had a serious health condition. I followed his political career quite astutely, and I'm just shocked. I can't believe the news we just heard here.

If it is in order, I'd would ask that we rise for a moment of silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask everyone in the chamber to stand and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Given the devastating news, and Jim having served in this House in an incredibly positive way, it can't be business as usual. I think we've got to have at least a 15-minute or half-hour recess. It can't be

business as usual. We've got to have at least a recess in respect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a request from the member for unanimous consent for a 20-minute recess. Agreed? Agreed.

The House stands recessed for 20 minutes.

The House recessed from 1424 to 1446.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Having received representation from the House leaders, I presume leave of the House to carry over the private members' business to a later date and that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs adjourn.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1446.

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Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 14 April 2014

Lundi 14 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 14 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 14 avril 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

BOOK OF CONDOLENCE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to inform the members that, in accordance with protocol, a book of condolence for the late Honourable Jim Flaherty has been made available for signing in the main lobby.

Pray be seated.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear pins today in recognition of April being Oral Health Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville is seeking unanimous consent to wear pins for Oral Health Month. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Je voudrais accueillir 55 invités, Speaker—55 Ontario medical students, as part of the Ontario Medical Students Association lobby day. As future physicians in Ontario, we will rely upon them for their care, and they, of course, recognize that they have a responsibility to be part of positive change in our health care system. So I welcome you all to Parliament.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome Manohar Singh Bal, secretary of the Canadian Sikh Association, to the Legislature today. I would like to remind all members that the CSA is having a Vaisakhi and Sikh Heritage Month reception at 4 o'clock this afternoon down in the dining room.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I am very pleased to welcome the grade 5 class from Highland Creek Public School in Scarborough. I'm looking forward to meeting them after question period today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help me welcome Rick Fiedorec and his wife, Michelle Chatten Fiedorec, who made a generous donation to the Rotary clubs of Kingston for their good works. They are joined today by Charlotte Jespersen, who's a Rotary exchange student from Denmark, and Iasmin Mendes,

who's a Rotary exchange student from Brazil. They're spending time with the Frontenac Rotary club and the Cataraqui Rotary club in Kingston. Please help me welcome them.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I invite the entire House and all the members to join me in welcoming two special guests. One is Jenny Kaur Gill, director of the Canadian Sikh Association, and also Gurni Gill, who is an ambassador with the United Nations for promoting a better, safer and fairer society—someone who is very active in the promotion of Punjabi culture, as well as someone who is active in the arts, both as a participant and as someone who has promoted and judged many cultural events promoting language, arts and dance.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome students from the Armenian public school from the beautiful riding of Don Valley East, and to join two other members from the opposite side in welcoming the Canadian Sikh Association to the Legislature on this beautiful day. Welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome my EA's sister, Pat Ostermeier, who is here with her Guelph Wellington Retired Women Teachers art club to attend question period and take in the Legislature's arts and architectural tour. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: Seated in the west members' gallery today are a number of people who will be here for Oral Health Month: Dr. Raffy Chouljian, who is with the board of directors of the Ontario Dental Association, Frank Bevilacqua from the ODA, Maggie Head from the ODA, and also Jennifer Boyd, who's representing Brusha-mania. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a large contingent of students from Belleville and Alberta who are making their way into the member's gallery today: from Holy Rosary in Belleville, and their exchange students all the way from Spruce Grove, Alberta. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce four guests from my riding who will be joining us shortly: Reaghan McGill, Robert McGill, Murray McGill and Kimberley Allen-McGill.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have some family here with me this morning. I have my aunt Vina and my uncle Jim, along with my cousin Liane Wuytenburg. They're from the area of Kitchener, and I would like to welcome the Chamberlain family.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Etobicoke Centre, for page captain Divya Dey: her mother, Pia Dey, is here, and grandmother

Indira Dutta is here, visiting our page captain. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're glad you're here.

We also have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the parliamentary staff from Lesotho, Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania. Individuals are meeting with their Canadian counterparts to share information and best practices. We welcome our visitors from those countries.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for that warm welcome.

ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am prepared to provide a ruling. On Monday, April 7, 2014, the member for Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, raised a point of privilege with respect to the upcoming provincial budget, and specifically with regard to a document the member says is a blueprint for the government's plan to systematically pre-announce, over the next several weeks, the contents of the budget. The third party House leader, Mr. Bisson, the government House leader, Mr. Milloy, and the official opposition House leader, Mr. Wilson, also made submissions on this point.

The document referred to by the member from Nipissing—the provenance of which is unknown; it has no reference to the person, office or authority responsible for creating it—is purportedly a four-and-a-half-week schedule of announcements to be made in the lead-up to the budget presentation, and the member from Nipissing alleges that these announcements are of actual items that will eventually be included in the budget. Since raising the point, the member has also provided me with additional submissions that give details of government announcements whose timelines and topics show that the complained-of document predicted and accorded with actual events, thus supporting the validity of the document.

The member's case is that the announcements represent an improper disclosure of information that first ought to be given to the Legislature and, moreover, as disclosures of budget contents via an intentional, systematic plan, are of a higher level of importance and represent contempt of the Legislature.

1040

The third party House leader made the case that the foundational core function of this assembly is to scrutinize and approve the government's plans to raise revenue and spend public funds. Because of this, proceedings related to financial procedures are of the highest importance among the business the House considers.

The government House leader, in both oral and later written submissions, contends that, in the first instance, there is significant authority for the case that the concept of budget secrecy is one of political convention, not parliamentary procedure or privilege. Secondly, the House leader states that the member for Nipissing is mistaken in relying for any support on the precedent of the so-called

Magna budget of 2003, since that instance represented a decision by the government of the day to present its budget outside of the Legislative Assembly, and at a time when it was not sitting. In the present case, he points out, no such thing has taken place.

With respect to the issue of budget secrecy, it has been widely settled in the procedural authorities and in the major Westminster-style Parliaments, including our own, numerous times, that a breach of budget secrecy does not equate to a matter of privilege.

For instance, the member for Nipissing provides an excerpt from House of Commons Procedure and Practice, as follows:

"There is a long-standing tradition of keeping the contents of the budget secret until the Minister of Finance actually presents it in the House."

However, this citation immediately goes on to saying the following:

"Respect for a budget's impact on financial markets has often been used as the basis of questions of privilege or points of order respecting the validity of budget proceedings where there has been a budget 'leak.' However, Speakers of the Canadian House have maintained that secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention, rather than one of privilege. Speaker Sauvé noted that while a breach of budget secrecy 'might have a very negative impact on business or on the stock market [and] might cause some people to receive revenues which they would not otherwise have been able to obtain ... [it has] no impact on the privileges of a member. [It] might do harm—irrevocable in some cases—to persons or institutions, but this has nothing to do with privilege. It has to do with the conduct of a minister in the exercise of his administrative responsibility.'"

A very thorough and often-quoted ruling by this assembly's Speaker, John Turner, on May 9, 1983, is well worth the time of members to read. In part, the ruling says:

"Budget secrecy is a political convention, as is the practice that the treasurer presents his budget in the House before discussing it in any other public forum. It has nothing to do with parliamentary privilege. My decision is supported by the decisions of a number of Speakers in several jurisdictions, including Speaker Sauvé on November 18, 1981, and most recently on April 19, 1983, and Speaker Smith of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia on April 1, 1976.

"I would also direct the attention of honourable members to the comments of Joseph Maingot in his text, *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, where he states:

"Parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members, not in their capacity as ministers or as party leaders, whips or parliamentary secretaries, but strictly in their capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Therefore, allegations of misjudgment, or mismanagement, or maladministration on the part of the minister in the performance of his ministerial duties do not come within the purview of parliamentary privilege.

And neither does an allegation that a minister permitted a budget leak constitute a matter of privilege.”

Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rule and Forms, sixth edition, says at citation 31:

“Budget secrecy is a political convention, and if breached, the minister may be attacked through a substantive motion, but not through a question of privilege.”

In Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand, McGee states at page 475:

“Certainly, premature disclosure of the budget has important political implications, though it is not a question of privilege.”

In making his argument, the member for Nipissing seeks to draw a distinction between a breach of privilege—which, as we see, does not arise as a result of a budget leak—and contempt of the Legislature. The member cites various parliamentary authorities on the nature of contempt, and argues that the intentional advance disclosure of budget contents outside the House lessens the role of the Legislature, deprives it of its ability to discharge its proper functions and diminishes the respect due to the House.

The member from Nipissing argues that the lack of deference to the House in this case regarding information contained in a budget raises this instance to parity with the so-called 2003 Magna budget, referenced earlier in this ruling.

In that instance, as noted by Speaker Carr in his May 8, 2003 ruling, the decision to present the budget at the Magna facility was motivated by the government's own stated desire to have “a direct conversation with the people of Ontario.” This is how Speaker Carr addressed that:

“When the government or any member claims that a budget presentation is needed outside the House well before it happens inside the House in order to communicate directly with the people or because of a perceived flaw in the parliamentary institution, there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished, and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant. Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber.”

As is well known, Speaker Carr then went on to find a *prima facie* case of contempt had been established.

In the present case, I cannot find that there is any intention on the part of the government to similarly bypass or pre-empt normal procedures of the Legislative Assembly with respect to the 2014 budget. Rather, I have expressly heard the Minister of Finance say on numerous occasions in this House that he intends to present his budget in this chamber when he is ready to do so. As the third party House leader so correctly pointed out, a core function of this assembly is to consider and scrutinize the finances of the province, and I see every reason to fully expect that to occur with respect to this year's budget. I

therefore cannot find real parallel in the present case and that of 2003.

This matter, in the end, is far from akin to those numerous instances in which members have complained about the government of the day making important policy announcements outside the House. Whether it be the government's financial plan or any other measure or announcement, Speakers have repeatedly looked unfavourably upon it when the House has not been the first to receive such information. There are rulings almost too numerous to compile in which Speakers have admonished governments for doing this, and defending the Legislature's claim to be the first recipient of major announcements. However, no Speaker has ever found that the snubbing of the Legislature in this manner has amounted even to a valid point of order—there being no standing order or practice to require it—let alone to a breach of privilege or contempt of the Legislature. While Speakers have observed that it is at minimum a courtesy, if not an expectation, for the House to be deferred to, in the face of an unwillingness to do so in these types of instances, Speakers have consistently stated they have no authority to compel these types of announcements to be made in the House first.

We are left with the assertion that bona fide elements of an upcoming budget have been released outside the Legislature. Until a budget is eventually presented, this won't be known, but aside from this demonstrating a willingness on the part of the government to continue to make announcements outside the House and releasing information before it is given to MPPs, it also likely represents a diminishment of the considerations that previously made budget secrecy such an imperative political practice; modern governments seem to feel considerably less constrained about the budget-related discussions they are willing to publicly have before the budget is actually released. It is not for the Speaker to speculate on the reasons why this might be so.

For the reasons given, I do not find a *prima facie* case has been made out.

Finally, though it did not function as an overriding precedent in this matter, I want to make an observation about how the 2003 Magna budget privilege issue was resolved. In that instance, the motion moved as a result of the Speaker's ruling was: “That this House declares that it is the undoubted right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario.” After significant debate, the House, in its wisdom, defeated the motion. That decision endures, and so it is therefore the standing posture of this Legislature that it is not entitled to be the first recipient of the budget. As Speaker, it is difficult to know what to make of that, and many of you may wonder the very same thing. Nevertheless, time and circumstance have not changed the fact that the House made such a pronouncement.

I thank the member from Nipissing for raising the matter and the government, official opposition and third party House leaders for their submissions in response.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I just want to say off the top, this is the first question we've had since the untimely passing of the Honourable Jim Flaherty. I think it moves us all to see so many members wearing green today in support of Jim. Our first thoughts and hearts, I know, of all members of the assembly are with the member from Whitby—Oshawa, Christine Elliott, and their sons, Galen, John and Quinn.

Applause.

1050

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Acting Premier: Acting Premier, we've seen taxes go up considerably under the Liberal government and we've seen a significant reduction of economic activity. We've lost jobs and our rate of growth is near the back of the pack in Canada.

Do you agree that there is a correlation between tax increases and job losses?

Hon. John Milloy: Before addressing the leader's question, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, the government of Ontario, I too want to express our deepest condolences to the Flaherty family, in particular, of course, our colleague the member from Whitby—Oshawa; and also, I think, join with the thousands of Canadians we saw over the weekend thanking Mr. Flaherty and indeed his family for his many, many years of public service.

In terms of the question from the Leader of the Opposition, no, I don't agree. I think that what we have seen is a Premier and a Minister of Finance who have come forward with a plan, a plan that will be further enunciated in a budget in several weeks' time, a plan which is balanced, which addresses the needs of more growth in this province.

We've seen us rebound since the recession, and I think we are on good course. We have a Premier who represents a safe pair of hands to make sure that our province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Must be a safecracker, because she's robbing the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess in other words, the member from Renfrew is correct. The only thing that's a safe bet about those hands is that they're going to go back in the pockets of Ontario families to take more money out of our pocketbooks.

Look, it was disturbing to hear your answer. You seemed to indicate that you think there's no connection between increased taxes and job losses. I remind you of a

very basic rule of economics or common sense: You increase the price of something, you get less of it. You increase taxes, fewer products are sold, less people will create jobs in the province of Ontario. Quite frankly, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals are a textbook case of increased taxes damaging economic activity.

I ask the deputy leader, will you now say, "No new tax increase. We're going to focus on job creation instead"? I actually want to lower taxes. Why do you want to increase them?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Acting Premier?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The fact is that the combined federal, provincial and corporate income tax rate in Ontario is lower than any US state. In fact, it's lower by almost 10 percentage points than the next US state. The result is that we're creating jobs. We've created 460,000 net new jobs, all of them full-time, since the bottom of the recession.

But let me talk about the leader of the official opposition and his scheme, which will kill jobs, drive down wages, weaken pensions and, frankly, cut billions from schools and hospitals. In right-to-work states—and this is what will happen if this individual becomes Premier—the average worker makes almost \$6,000 a year less than the other states. Compared to median household income in states with right-to-work—it's \$6,400 less in those states—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland, the member from Prince Edward—Hastings—no, he didn't. I'm sorry. I'm trying to use just my ears. Come to order, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess to the economic development minister now: It's disturbing to hear you basically say you think taxes are too low in the province of Ontario. I think they're too high. That's why my million jobs plan will actually lower taxes, have less debt, get energy rates under control. My plan is to create a million new middle-class jobs in our province to give hope to young people again.

The minister says that our tax rate on businesses is among the lowest in North America, but, Minister, you conveniently either ignore or are not aware that income taxes are much higher in Ontario than in the states or provinces that you mentioned. They certainly didn't bring in the HST tax increase in the states that you mentioned.

Let's not forget, you said that the HST tax increase would create 600,000 new jobs in the province of Ontario. Will the minister stand by that? You said that by putting a new tax on gas for your car and your hydro bill would create 600,000 jobs. Can you report back on

exactly how many new jobs your HST tax helped create in the province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think that in the four or maybe five years since the HST was introduced—that estimate was 600,000 jobs over a 10-year period. We've already created 450,000 jobs since the bottom of the recession, since 2009.

One of the things that concerns me the most, quite frankly, about the job scheme that the member opposite, the leader of the official opposition, has is the right to work for less. In those states where they have right-to-work laws, which is the direction that the member opposite wants to go in his attack on labour—the rate of workplace deaths is 36% higher in states with these right-to-work laws, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. We're not going in that direction. We believe that it's a partnership between government and the private sector, labour and their representatives, to continue to build jobs. We are building jobs in this province, right across the province, and will continue to do so.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess I'll go back to the economic development minister. Again, I remind you that your title is supposed to be about creating jobs in the province of Ontario, not Michigan or Wisconsin or Indiana. I don't know if you've got that quite right yet.

We had a revelation now from the minister, who says that the 600,000 jobs they wanted to create through increasing the HST were back-end-loaded and were to come in the last of the 10 years. If we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs and you've got 600,000 to come, I guess it's another 900,000 jobs that you're going to create in 2021. Minister, I remind you: I've got a million jobs plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario today, to put people to work in the province now, not 10 years from now.

I'll ask you this, too, Minister, because you campaigned on this. You've increased the HST. You brought in an income tax increase. You brought in a new health tax—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Before I go to the minister, on both sides, even when the question is being put, I'm hearing people heckle from that side. It's hard to discipline somebody on that side when somebody is heckling their own leader. In this case, when somebody gives the answer, I don't want to hear any heckling.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I guess the leader of the official opposition didn't see the 95,000 jobs created last year. In fact, last month, 13,400 jobs were added, including 15,000 jobs added for our young people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order. The member from Stormont, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: But I'll say, just today we're announcing two important investments by this government for job creation—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Where?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite is asking where. Well, in fact, they're in Tory ridings, and I suspect that the Conservatives who currently hold these ridings—Klassic Coconut in Simcoe is a fantastic company that is expanding their work in that important jurisdiction as well, which is, of course, a Tory riding. Transcontinental RBW Graphics in Owen Sound is another one creating jobs. Just today we're making these two announcements.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will come to order—second time.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm looking forward to making other announcements as we continue to create jobs, and we are.

Quite frankly, I don't know where the Leader of the Opposition is getting his facts, but he's clearly not looking at the facts that are there for anybody to see.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, here's a major difference: The minister thinks we need to bribe businesses to stay in Ontario. I want to create an environment where they're knocking down the doors to set up shop—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to accept that. Please withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You want to give businesses money to try to get them to stay. I want to actually lower taxes and get energy under control so they knock down the doors to build here in Ontario. That's my plan. I call it the million jobs plan.

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I know that the Premier is making an announcement today that she wants to expand subways, and she's going to increase taxes to pay for it. I think the last thing you want to do is to increase taxes. That's going to cause us to lose even more jobs. You're at the back of the pack. We built 64 new subway stations; we didn't increase taxes because we grew the economy. Why are you going to increase taxes yet again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about subways built, but I'll talk about the subway that you didn't build. In fact, it's in my riding: the Eglinton subway. In the 1990s, the hole was dug, the

subway was ready to be built, and your government filled in that hole.

I want to talk about his jobs scheme, his idea of what he wants to replace here. I'm going to quote the *Toronto Star*: "Hudak's plan is a collection of recycled ideas and dangerous policies that would kill jobs or drastically reduce wages and pensions." Or here in the *Welland Tribune* as well, Grant LaFleche: Hudak's "magical ... thinking is just insulting to our collective intelligence." Or we've got economist Don Drummond in the *Globe and Mail*: "It's extremely unlikely to produce many jobs. A few calculations should have made that evident."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the minister calls it magical thinking; I call my plan an ambitious turnaround plan that will put people back to work in our province. It's called the million jobs plan. It will actually fire up our economy and give young people a chance to get their own home, to pay down the mortgage.

I'm going to ask you again. We've heard this story now several times. I know you guys never use the words "Dalton" and "McGuinty" in the same sentence anymore, even though the Premier famously campaigned on "Dalton, Dalton, Dalton," but it's the same playbook. Before an election campaign, you said there would be no increases on middle-class families, but after, you brought in the health tax, you brought in an HST tax grab, you brought in the eco tax. I could use up all of question period with your tax increases. It hurts our economy. It hurts young people and their aspirations in the province. I believe taxes need to come down to create jobs. Why are you going to increase taxes on hard-working families again? Just say no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, of course the Premier has already said that she's not going to increase the HST. She's not going to increase taxes for middle-income earners, as well.

The Leader of the Opposition's plan would kill jobs, would drive down wages, would cut billions from our schools and our hospitals.

Quite frankly, if the Eglinton line that his party filled in had been completed—that hole that they filled in the 1990s—in fact, they spent \$150 million filling in that hole.

On the HST, the member opposite knows that he was against it until the election, and then he flip-flopped, and now he's in support of the HST changes that were made in this province.

We're finding the progress made in creating jobs—460,000 since the recession. We're the number one destination for foreign direct investment. We have the lowest corporate, provincial, federal income tax rate in North America, Mr. Speaker.

So these are the improvements we're seeing—the unemployment rate is coming down.

There's much more work to be done, but we're on the right track.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On behalf of New Democrats, I would like to begin by extending our condolences to the member for Whitby—Oshawa and her children, on the passing of Jim Flaherty, husband and father that he was to that family. We also want to extend our condolences to the Conservative caucus, who are, I'm sure, going through a difficult time in not only the loss of Mr. Flaherty, but the support of their member from Whitby—Oshawa. We also want to join with Canadians in noting Mr. Flaherty's many years of dedicated public service, Speaker, as we mourn his passing.

Speaker, my first question is to the Acting Premier. In the investigation into whether Liberal staff committed a criminal breach of trust, the OPP allege that the House leader's chief of staff is one of many people who had their computer accessed and possibly wiped clean. Can the minister confirm whether this is the case?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I can do nothing of the sort. This is an OPP investigation. I'm very happy—I'm a very patient person—to go over the facts of the situation.

Several weeks ago, a document was released through the courts which gave a glimpse of an ongoing investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police. The tradition of this Legislature, something that was confirmed by an OPP officer who appeared in front of the justice committee, is that politicians should stay out of OPP investigations. I will not be commenting on anything related to that investigation in the House or out there in a scrum with the press.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For over two years the minister has been tasked with stickhandling key questions about the waste of over \$1 billion in the gas plant scandals and criminal investigations into the possible disappearance of information. Police believe the minister's own chief of staff had her computer accessed. Now, is the minister claiming seriously that he has never spoken with her about this?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm not sure where she's going with this question, but if we're going to start to get into drive-by smears against staffers here in the Legislature—because I think we all recognize the important role that's played by our staff; the fact that they cannot defend themselves.

The fact of the matter is that the Ontario Provincial Police have indicated that there is one person who is of interest in terms of this potential charge, which has not been proven yet, and that is the former chief of staff—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —to the former Premier. If the honourable member wants to start to go through the list of people they've interviewed—as I've said, if you look at the court document, they list everyone from opposition MPPs to a whole range of current and former staff. I think we should allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is actually to the minister, and it's about what the minister did or didn't speak to his staff about. It's not about the staff person specifically.

Last week, the minister claimed not only that he knew nothing about the OPP investigation until it broke in the news but that he knew nothing about the investigation conducted by his own ministry. Now he's claiming he knows nothing about what's happening in his own office. Does the minister think that's credible?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the fact that the Ontario Provincial Police was looking into the matter has been a matter of public record for quite some time. There have been numerous articles that have been written in the media and statements. I believe Commissioner Lewis even appeared in front of the justice committee.

The details of that, which were released in a court document two weeks ago, provided a glimpse into this investigation. As minister, I had informed my deputy minister of the day that I did not want to be involved or informed as to what was going on in that OPP investigation because, quite frankly, that is the proper thing to do when you are a minister and it is the proper thing to do when you're the leader of the third party or a member of this Legislature. Allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. As the officer pointed out in committee, it could even jeopardize an investigation to have a politician interfere.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's pretty rich that the Liberals think the proper thing to do is something they know. They don't know what the proper thing to do is.

My question is for the Acting Premier. The government says they've learned their lessons, frankly, from the gas plants scandal, but last week they confirmed that they're ready to cook up new, even riskier private power deals. Can the Acting Premier tell us how much of our hydro system the government is prepared to sell?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, what we are talking about is a decision to cancel two gas plants that was supported by every single party in this Legislature. The fact of the matter is that our efforts have been to make sure that sort of error never happens again, and our efforts have been to strengthen our power system here in the province of Ontario. I commend the Minister of Energy for the good work that he has done, and I recommend that members look at the government's record, which I would put up

against the NDP's lack of a record or lack of position when it comes to energy any day of the week.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will come to order.

Supplementary?

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Ms. Andrea Horwath: As the Acting Premier knows, the PC caucus is very gung-ho on the same sort of sell-off. Yet here's what the Liberal energy minister at the time said about those plants, just months ago: "That's just a creeping approach by the Tories to get rid of the whole asset ... We need to keep the whole asset in public hands, public control working for families and businesses in the province of Ontario."

Now, is the Acting Premier saying they agree with the creeping approach of the Tories or with what the energy minister said?

Hon. John Milloy: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Minister of Energy's comments today are exactly the same as they were last week and exactly the same as when the member quoted. The minister said last week, to a similar question, that maintaining public ownership and key assets will continue to be a priority. That's pretty clear on what our position is.

Why the NDP would be opposed to taking a look at our assets and trying to find better ways to get value is beyond me. Isn't that what all of us should be doing, working together and trying to do that, getting better value for taxpayers' investments and ratepayers' investments? Why would the NDP be opposed to doing that? They are so backwards in their philosophy they have no clue how to get better value for taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are stuck paying some of the highest hydro bills in Canada and they don't see solutions coming from this government, just a billion-dollar tab for private power scandals and political games. This government has made it clear they won't merge agencies to tackle bloat. They won't put a hard cap on CEO salaries at twice the Premier's pay. They won't do anything to stop exporting electricity at discount rates and sticking people with the bill. Their only plan is to pull a page from the PC white papers. Does the Acting Premier think that's good enough?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our commitment to low- and middle-income families has been proven through many years of hard work. You look at our Ontario Clean Energy Benefit: 10% off energy bills. You look at our Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, saving a maximum of over \$1,000 for families across this province. You look at the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, saving families \$210 a year.

We've been there for low- and middle-income families when it comes to this. What they want to know is where they are going to get their power from under an NDP government. They're against nuclear. They're

against gas. They're against wind turbines. They're against hydro. They're against every form of energy provision in this province. That's the question that rate-payers across this province ought to know. Where are we going to get the power from if, God forbid, you ever become Premier?

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. As the minister who is constitutionally responsible for the public service IT department, he has stood here in this place and defended a senior bureaucrat offering a super password to allegedly wipe out 24 hard drives in the Premier's office and access to 24 of those computers which contained sensitive cabinet information to an outsider with no security or background check.

The role of the Minister of Government Services is not to defend the alleged destruction of documents in order to avoid public scrutiny. We are in the midst of a \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal that saved five seats in the last election. The hard drives, documents and emails in question relate to that scandal, to an obstructed Information and Privacy Commissioner report and an OPP investigation.

Given, as I said, that the minister is the constitutionally responsible minister, doesn't he think it's time that he accepts responsibility for the destruction of those emails?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Government Services?

Hon. John Milloy: I know the honourable member is having some fun here playing police officer. She's trying to turn this chamber into some kind of Law and Order Paper. But the fact of the matter is that there is an issue in front of the Ontario Provincial Police. There is a document that went before the court, which outlines some allegations, which gives us a glimpse into where we are in terms of an investigation. There is nothing in that document that is proven. It is now up to the OPP to finish their work, to draw conclusions and then, if necessary, take the next steps.

The advice that we received from the OPP in front of the justice committee is that the prudent course for all of us is not to play amateur detective; it is to stand back and allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister seems to be very fixated on Law and Order, but from here it looks like we're watching *The Sopranos*, because that's how they are running their government.

The minister had an opportunity to launch an internal investigation into the high-level access given by David Nicholl to Peter Faist, and he didn't. He had the opportunity to recover the deleted emails from servers in this

billion-dollar scandal, and he didn't. He had the opportunity to remove the rogue bureaucrat from heading up the IT department just two weeks ago, and he didn't.

Instead, he stands by, day in and day out, refusing to accept and acknowledge the fact he served in Dalton McGuinty's cabinet—and that holding this government to account is somehow an affront to democracy, and of course he stands here expecting anyone in this province to believe that Premier Wynne is actually without repute in all of this. We know, Speaker, that not to be the case.

This minister, his Premier and that government have been negligent in protecting the public interest time and time again. Will he own up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing wrong with the opposition holding the government to account. All we ask, Mr. Speaker, is that they use facts.

The fact of the matter is, there is a document that was tabled with the court, and that document talks about one individual, the former chief of staff to the former Premier, and actions that may or may not have taken place under his watch. These are unproven allegations.

What we are asking is two things: We are first of all asking that members stand back and allow the OPP to undertake their work, and we are also asking the opposition to deal with facts.

That member, who understands about *bluedraft.com* and the fact that she had to issue an apology when she didn't deal with facts, should know very well the dangerous, dangerous territory that she and her colleagues are getting involved with.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Acting Premier claims that when he learned of an internal government investigation into the deletion of gas plant emails and wiping computers in the Premier's office, he didn't want to know anything about it.

It was also through the Acting Premier that we learned the Liberal Party did an internal investigation that led to the firing of Peter Faist.

Are there any other internal investigations being kept secret from Ontarians?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I would direct members to the document that was tabled with the court. It is now a public document. It outlines a number of activities that were undertaken by the Ontario Provincial Police, including about the co-operation that it received from the Ministry of Government Services.

As I stated in the Legislature, I believe it was last week, I was approached in a general way by my deputy minister, who said that it was now a matter of public record at that point that the OPP was looking into this

matter, and that they had had some contact with my ministry, and did I want to know any details of it? I said that that would not be the prudent course, that I would allow the OPP to undertake their work, and I did not want to be briefed on it.

Mr. Speaker, I give the same message to the member from Toronto–Danforth: Let us allow the OPP to undertake their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as is clear, I was not asking about the OPP investigation, but the Liberal investigation. The government has told Ontarians that the Liberal Party conducted an internal investigation that led to Peter Faist being fired, but they won't say what they were investigating or what they found.

Ontarians have learned that the Ministry of Government Services conducted an internal forensic investigation into the wiping of the computers in the Premier's office, but they are keeping the report secret.

Is the Acting Premier still going to insist that the government is open and transparent?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I will make no apologies for the fact that we are co-operating with the Ontario Provincial Police.

The fact of the matter is, I'm not sure where the NDP are going with these questions. It seems to me that the member from Toronto–Danforth is asking us to interfere with an OPP investigation. I'm a little bit troubled by the fact that we have the Progressive Conservatives, on the one hand, telling us that we're not doing enough, and on the other hand, we have the NDP, who are saying that too much is being done.

Let us allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work, Mr. Speaker, to respect that process and allow them to reach their own conclusions.

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ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week, I along with my colleagues from Vaughan, Scarborough–Agincourt and Mississauga East–Cooksville were at the Standing Committee for Finance and Economic Affairs, where we heard public deputations on Bill 20. We heard opinions and complaints about the Ontario Municipal Board and the role it plays in land use planning, and we heard from city councillors in Toronto such as Adam Vaughan and Kristyn Wong-Tam, who suggested Toronto is constantly at the Ontario Municipal Board, fighting against development plans for important planning decisions.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister explain to this House whether the government believes that Bill 20 will adequately address these concerns?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. I also want to thank the members of our Toronto caucus who, in my short time in this ministry, have come to me with their interest in this particular issue.

Speaker, there has been suggestion that developers always win and that Toronto is always in front of the OMB, but the chief planner for the city of Toronto, Jennifer Keesmaat, doesn't agree. She has said a couple of things that I think are worth noting. One, she doesn't agree that they're always there. Contrary to what some might believe, the city is not beholden to the OMB. She also goes on to say the following, Speaker: that only 4% of applications even end up at the OMB, with the city winning about 50% of the appeals that do go to the OMB.

We do know, Speaker, that at some point not all decisions that are made at the council level would necessarily be viewed as good planning, and we on this side of the House do in fact believe that we need some appeal mechanism. The truth is, on Bill 20, it does not force or legislate, if it were to pass, any appeals mechanism. We believe one is necessary, and I can speak more to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad that our government will shortly be introducing changes to the land use planning system that would strengthen community involvement.

But I know that many of my constituents work in our construction and building industries and they are worried about the proposed changes in this bill. They're worried that these proposed changes could put their jobs on the line.

Even community groups are worried about what removing the Ontario Municipal Board will mean for their communities. In fact, Kent McCaskill, president of the Friends of Glen Davis Ravine, from the riding of Beaches–East York, has said, "Without some sort of intermediary between the residents and the developer it would be the wild, wild west."

I know that many local groups are concerned about having their voices heard.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will the minister please explain what would happen if Bill 20 was to become law?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, again I thank the member for her question.

I do want to start by saying that in relatively short order, we will be coming forward with a package of reforms on land use planning and OMB reform more specifically, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, based primarily upon the work that was done by former minister Linda Jeffrey, and I want to thank her for her efforts in that regard.

Speaker, fundamentally the problem is that Bill 20 will not set up an appeals body, and by default it will be transferring people's concerns from the OMB to the courts. We don't understand, on this side of the House, how in any way that makes access to land use reform planning appeal systems any better for anybody.

The other part that's significantly a problem with this is, should that bill pass, there is no transition period. Immediately upon its passage, should that have hap-

pened, the OMB would be gone. There would be no transition period, should the city of Toronto wish to set up an appeals body, to get anything done.

Transferring people to the court system is not a good way to deal with that. I don't know any judges who are planners, Speaker.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Acting Premier. For weeks now, we've been asking you specific questions about the deletion of emails in the Premier's office. We've asked you what you knew about the email destruction and when. In response, you repeat the same talking points about co-operating with the police investigation and that you've brought in new rules and procedures for documentation retention.

The Archives and Recordkeeping Act was passed in 2006. So in other words, it was in place in 2011, when Liberal staff in the Premier's office were routinely deleting their records at the end of the day. If Liberals followed the rules that were in place in 2011, we wouldn't be having this discussion here today.

So tell me, Acting Premier: What good is bringing in new rules and procedures when it's the same Liberal gang in place?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time; actually, third, but I'll give you a pass.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, through you, I ask the honourable member: Since when is co-operating with the Ontario Provincial Police and not interfering in an investigation "talking points"? Is this what Ontarians can expect from the opposition should they ever form government, that they will freely interfere in an OPP investigation? This is serious business.

As to the second part of the question, we are all aware of the report that came out from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and we should also all be aware that we took non-legislative steps to ensure that we were complying with the act that she cited. At the same time, we have legislation before this Legislature which would, in fact, strengthen that legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Laurie Scott: They're the government that put in the rule in 2006. You didn't follow it, your government, and the OPP—you're the party that's being investigated by the OPP. So you might have had some credibility if you'd made an effort to find the guilty parties and bring them to justice, but you didn't do that. You've been claiming a conspiracy of silence has existed in your office since the day McGuinty handed the keys to Kathleen Wynne, but the justice committee has established repeatedly that high-level senior Liberal staffers knew

that gas plant information on hard drives was illegally erased. Either this Premier didn't know and her staff deliberately misled her, or she knew and hasn't been up front with the people of Ontario. When can the hard-working people of Ontario expect you to finally come clean about what you knew and stop making a mockery out of the Office of the Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Hon. John Milloy: On this side of the House, we're not prepared to make a mockery of an Ontario Provincial Police investigation. The fact of the matter is, we allow the police to undertake their work. Let me quote from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, about the action that has been taken by our government. On August 21, she had this to say about the Premier: "She has been fully co-operative with me and my office. In fairness to Premier Wynne, she said, 'You have my full co-operation, whatever you want from us.'" July 26: "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things. The government is dedicated to opening up access to government data." On June 13 of last year: "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff." June 25, 2013: "I'm pleased now to report that the new government has acted proactively to address the recommendations made in my report."

Mr. Speaker, we have taken the necessary steps.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Acting Premier: Ontarians want transit that works, but they look back on the Liberal record and can only see years of waste, delay and mismanagement. Presto costs have soared by \$450 million. The government wants to run dirty diesel trains through our neighbourhoods instead of clean electric trains.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful when I'm trying to get attention for your member—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Along with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who always likes to interject.

Finish, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Metrolinx and the Minister of Transportation have cancelled more transit projects than they have completed, putting short-term politics ahead of the public interest. Scarborough transit plans are in chaos. How can the government expect the public to trust it with more money for transit when it has mismanaged this important file so badly?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're the only party in this Legislature that has been there for transit from day 1. We've put \$19 billion into transit. I can almost guarantee you, every one of those dollars you and your party opposed. The NDP scoffs at our multi-billion dollar investments. I think what we need to do is ask: What are you going to build, when are you going to build it and how are you going to fund it? Over the last 10 years, you've said nothing about any of those things with regard to building strong public transit in the GTA and across this province.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Four years ago, the current Premier cut \$4 billion in transit funding, saying, "We need to slow down the cash flow." It was the current Premier who helped kill Transit City because she and the former—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was the current Premier who helped kill Transit City because she and the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, were afraid to say no to Rob Ford. And it's the current Premier who is using our desperate need for transit to shift even more of Ontario's tax burden away from corporations and wealthy Ontarians and onto everyone else.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Instead of dealing with these problems, that government has wasted time attacking others. Does the government understand that it's time to stop attacking others and start fixing the problems it has created with transit?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're not attacking others; we're building transit. That's what we're doing. But we will attack those who make light of the investments that we're making. I mean, think about this. We put in funding to build the York line. The NDP opposed that. We're funding the air-rail link line. The NDP are opposing that. We're finally building a subway to the Scarborough City Centre, after people from Scarborough have been looking for that for 30 years. Who's standing in the way of that? The NDP. We're going to build transit. We're going to keep on building transit. We're going to fund it, unlike the NDP, who have no plan whatsoever. We're going to get it done. This Premier is going to get it done. I'm looking forward to the budget because that's going to elaborate on that even further.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Newcomers from around the world choose Ontario, more specifically my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, because we have access to some of the best public education in the world, some of the best opportunities to build a career, and a culture that

promotes the economic and social value of diversity. Our government recognizes that when newcomers in Scarborough—Agincourt arrive, they will benefit from English- or French-language classes. Specifically, specialized language training programs help newcomers learn the language specific to their occupation and help them become more employable. When newcomers are successful in entering Ontario's labour force, it benefits all of us. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please share with us how the ministry facilitates delivery of these ESL services to adult newcomers across Ontario.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the important question. All 72 school boards are eligible to deliver adult English- and French-as-a-second-language programs here in our province. Adult ESL and FSL funding is provided to Ontario school boards based on enrolment numbers and demand in the area. Our government has invested \$67 million this year so 120,000 learners can learn in our schools. Participants can learn and improve their English and French in classes at their personal levels from beginners to advanced levels as well. Participants enrol in language training with a wide variety of goals in mind, including improving their language skills for daily life, for the labour market and to pursue higher education. Providing accessible, publicly funded adult ESL and FSL courses is part of our government's commitment to improve the lives of newcomers, because we know when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for that information on the government's commitment to adult ESL education.

Obtaining Canadian citizenship is one of the highest honours for many of Ontario's newcomers. I encourage everyone to attend a Canadian citizenship ceremony in their life, to fully appreciate how important citizenship is to newcomers. As an immigrant, I know becoming a citizen is a privilege and one that many newcomers consider one of their ultimate goals upon arriving to this country. Recently, I learned that Citizenship and Immigration Canada now accepts Ontario's ESL and FSL language training certificates as proof of language proficiency in citizenship applications. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please tell us what this means for Ontario's newcomers and what role our government had in bringing this initiative forward?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question. We've been working with the federal government in a collaborative way to make sure that we can get our certificates recognized when people apply for their citizenship here in the province of Ontario. Until now, only those who were in LINC Programs received a certificate demonstrating their language proficiency for citizenship purposes. We are pleased to see that the federal government has finally listened to the province of Ontario and allowed for people who earn their certificates through our courses here when they apply for their citizenship.

This is a huge step for Ontario and it's great for our newcomers, because we want our newcomers to be successful.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Government Services.

We have said all along that the deletion, destruction and denials would be a bigger scandal than the \$1.1-billion gas plant cancellation. It goes to expose the very DNA of the Liberal Party. You went to great pains to block us from ever getting any evidence coming forward. You delivered some documents; we fought for more. You deleted emails; we got them restored. You destroyed emails; we brought in the OPP.

You've gone to great lengths to stop us from ever getting to the truth, and now we know why. We learned of the widespread destruction of documents in the very office of the Liberal Premier. You stand there and read lots of notes to us, Minister. Why not read us a note of what was in those deleted emails?

Hon. John Milloy: Not surprisingly, I disagree entirely with the characterization that's been put forth by the opposition critic. The fact of the matter is, under this Premier's watch, we brought in the justice committee. We gave it extraordinary powers.

If he wants to hear some of the stats, we have provided 311,325 pages to the committee. We've responded to 35 motions. The committee has heard from 77 witnesses and has had 117 hours of testimony.

Mr. Speaker, there has been one gap in terms of the committee's hearings, and that is when we asked the Progressive Conservative candidates to come forward from that area to talk about why they made the exact same commitment. The fact of the matter is that the Conservatives blocked them and would not encourage them to come forward. We are still anxious to hear from them about their analysis and their policy work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Minister of Government Services. Delete, destroy, deny: That's your new motto. You had a chance to come clean with Ontarians and you chose to delete documents. You had a chance to come clean with the gas plant scandal committee; you destroyed emails. You had a chance to come clean with the OPP; you deny any knowledge.

These emails didn't just delete themselves. They didn't just destroy themselves. Now you sit there and deny any knowledge.

You spent \$1.1 billion to save Liberal seats and you simply laugh it off. Well, Ontarians aren't laughing. They have the same question I have: As minister, what else is it that you're hiding?

Hon. John Milloy: Deny? This was the party whose leader went on YouTube and said that the only way to get rid of the gas plant in Mississauga was for him to become Premier. This was the party whose candidates went out and sent out robocalls, tweets and press releases saying

that the only way to get rid of these gas plants was to elect a Progressive Conservative government.

I direct the honourable member to the document that was tabled by the OPP with the court, which states that despite the fact the Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats made the exact same promise, they actually criticized our government for going through with it.

As I've said many times, Mr. Speaker, it was a promise they made—a promise we kept.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Premier has stuck by her claim that she knew nothing about the allegations of computer wiping that took place between February 6 and March 20, 2013. But after becoming the leader of the Liberal Party, the Premier enlisted the aid of an entire transition team.

Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians when the transition team learned that the widespread deletion of emails and wiping of computers occurred in the Premier's office?

1140

Hon. John Milloy: I think I'm tasked with the job of being Acting Premier because I'm a very patient person. I'm very, very happy to outline the situation that we find ourselves in. Two weeks ago, a document was made public by the courts. It was a document produced by the Ontario Provincial Police which gives us glimpses into an ongoing investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police.

As we have been cautioned by OPP representatives at the justice committee, the best thing for politicians to do with an OPP investigation is to stand back and to allow them to do their work—not to comment on it, not to try to play amateur detective, not to try, as I said earlier, to turn this place into Law and Order Paper, but to allow the police to undertake their work. That is what we are doing on this side of the House, and I would encourage the honourable member to follow suit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm going to remind the Acting Premier that my question did not involve the OPP whatsoever. It's about this government's investigation and what this government knew. The Premier has insisted that the current Liberal staffers whose computers were wiped have never spoken about this, including the three who work in the Premier's office, a claim that a lot of people find pretty hard to believe.

Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians when senior Premier's-office staff learned that current staffers in their office had their computers wiped?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, my patience knows no bounds. I will go back to the beginning. The fact of the matter is that it has been a matter of public record—I believe, since roughly last June—that the Ontario Provincial Police have been looking into this issue in a broad way. That is what has been a matter of public record.

We've even had Commissioner Lewis appear in front of the justice committee.

About two weeks ago, we learned two things. Actually, we learned several things. We got a glimpse into the OPP investigation. We found out that it was ongoing, meaning that politicians should not be commenting on it or speculating on it, and we also learned that it was focused on one individual: the former chief of staff to the former Premier.

None of the allegations have been proven. We are talking about a very serious situation. We have people's reputations on the line. Let us allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, the Honourable Brad Duguid. As the residents in my own riding of Etobicoke North know well, post-secondary education is crucial to a prosperous economic future.

Many of the families that I speak with tell me that their children in high school are faced with tough decisions upon graduation. Students at the end of their high school careers, for example, must decide to attend either college or university. Some students worry that, if they attend a college but later decide to attend university, transferring credits can be difficult. I also know that students face transfer-credit challenges even when they move within the same university system to different divisions.

I use this opportunity, Minister, to once again welcome the 55 future doctors, medical students from all across Ontario, of the Ontario Medical Association.

Speaker, my question is this: Can the minister please inform this chamber what we as a government are doing to assist these students?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That is an excellent question, and it's an important one for students across this province. How many of us in this Legislature actually ended up going into the profession that we started out in in our first year of college or university? Very few.

Students do change their minds. In this fast-changing economy that we have, students are often forced to change their minds to be able to adjust to the changes in the economy. I'm really pleased that in January we announced the creation of a new course-to-course online guide and interactive database that lets students see how their credits are recognized at other institutions, in order for them to be able to make informed decisions about the future of their education.

Students can access this database through ONTransfer.ca, a website designed to give more students flexibility and give them more choice in post-secondary studies. This is going to be really helpful to students across this province. It moves us from a province that I would say was in the middle of the road to one that's now a leader in credit transfers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister; I appreciate the update. I believe that these steps, of course, are important, and that we must ease transfer movements within the post-secondary system, particularly within the same university system. But, as you've rightly cited, with an ever-changing global environment, business climate and market economy, students must be empowered and enabled to change their career paths, should they choose.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, more and more of that educational access occurs on Web-based learning platforms, yet students also face barriers when trying to learn online. Many institutions across the province do not, in fact, recognize the courses that are available online, often making it difficult for students with unique circumstances to complete their degrees.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister please explain what steps are being taken to bring parity between classrooms and online learning experiences?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's another excellent question. The fact of the matter is that Ontario is a leader. Some of our institutions are global leaders when it comes to online learning. But not all of them are, so some students in this province don't have access to the globally competitive, quality online learning that they need to have access to.

That's why in January we announced Ontario Online, an online centre of excellence designed to enhance the learning experience and provide greater access to our students for online learning experiences. Ontario Online will offer students: the flexibility to learn wherever and whenever it works best for them; high-quality learning experiences from new courses that use only the best online learning technology and world-class instruction—because that's what our students deserve. This will provide comprehensive, 24/7 online supports.

Again, we've moved from a province that was a leader—but not the leader—in North America, to a province that I believe will soon be the leader in online learning.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm proud of how eastern Ontario has rallied since the University of Guelph announced it was shutting down the Kemptville campus. Our community has made very positive steps already to ensure that agricultural and technological education continues in Kemptville, but from the start I've said that it's critical to have an intake of new ag students in September.

Yesterday, on province-wide radio, the Premier said: "I am hopeful that Brad and I will have an announcement soon ... As well, a good solid statement about getting a first-year class in for the fall 2014 semester."

Minister, students are making those important decisions right now regarding education in the fall. Can you confirm today that a first-year class will be attending Kemptville campus in September? When are you going to tell us how this will all work?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member opposite and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who I know have been working very hard and very closely with us on this issue; both of them have. I know that the local community, through a number of different individuals, from the mayor to the group that has been set up to try to find local solutions to help, have been doing a magnificent job as well.

The Premier has given me my marching orders on this and that's to ensure that we find a solution. The member has got his finger on a very important part of that solution, and that's ensuring that the September cohort proceeds so that students in eastern Ontario and others who want to access Kemptville campus have that opportunity. We're working very hard with our post-secondary partners and I hope that very soon we'll have some good news, but we're not quite there yet. We're working hard at it and I'll let the member know as soon as there's something more to be said.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: The other critical factor in continuing the 97-year tradition of agricultural excellence at Kemptville is maintaining the assets. I was pleased that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario responded positively to requests from myself and others to defer any decisions about moving the quota allotted to the Dairy Education and Innovation Centre. Dairy is a \$1.6-billion industry that sustains over 20,000 jobs in eastern Ontario, so it's obvious that we have to maintain that program in our region. But quota is only part of what makes that dairy program operate. We need the equipment and the herd too.

Minister, DFO has stepped up. What is your ministry doing to ensure that the other assets, including those our community raised funds to purchase, stay right in Kemptville?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and the member from Leeds–Grenville and the mayor of Kemptville, among others, had the opportunity to tour the Kemptville campus a number of weeks ago. I've got to tell you, I was impressed. I believe it's 800 acres of land there. I believe there are about 70 buildings there. Some are in good shape. Some are in not-so-good shape.

I think this is a gem of an asset that has incredible potential. We've got to work on the short-term solution, as the member said, to ensure that, as of September, there is a cohort of students that can gain access to post-secondary education at that location. That's what we are working toward in the short-term.

In the long-term, there is plenty of work to be done with the local community, with the Ontario Federation of

Agriculture, with dairy farmers, with the local members and others to develop a vision for long-term sustainability of that campus. That's what we are out to do, and I thank the member for the question—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a minute, please. Let's get the member from Northumberland under control.

New question.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question is to Acting Premier. We know that the Ontario Energy Board approved an application by Union Gas for a 28% increase. Can you tell me why your government is standing on the sidelines while the OEB rubber-stamps these huge rate increases?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's a busy morning, Mr. Speaker. That's an important question. At the same time, one would think the NDP would understand the role of the Ontario Energy Board. Their role is to receive input in terms of applications on whether to increase or decrease natural gas. The member knows that over the last 10 years we've seen natural gas decreasing on a steady basis. Of late—many would say because of the weather—there has been a spike, and the Ontario Energy Board is doing the work that they do.

They're independent of the government. They're independent of this Legislature. One would think the member would not want us to interfere in this independent hearing. Certainly it's not our intention to interfere, as much as we do recognize the challenges that ratepayers and users are facing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, if you're not going to stand up for the average person who can't afford these rate increases, who else? That's my question.

The reality is that we see, coming down the pipe, a 44% increase on hydro costs as a result of what it is that you guys have put forward. Now we see Union Gas and others coming to you and saying, "We need to have a rate increase." What people back home are saying is, "If this is all about what happened this winter, why is this rate increase permanent?"

People cannot afford to pay, and they expect to see their government being there to assist them, not standing on the sidelines. So I say again: Will you take action as the minister and stand with the people of Ontario, and not necessarily just those gas companies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It must be nice to have the magic wand that the NDP have to control the cost of natural gas on the continent of North America. That's not something that is within our control or yours. We have stepped up when it comes to being sensitive to energy costs for families.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member scoffs, but he scoffs because he didn't support this: Our Ontario Clean Energy Benefit brought costs down by 10% for ratepayers. Our Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves individuals \$963 a year. We understand that times are tough. We understand that a spike in energy costs when it comes to natural gas is challenging.

At the same time, we have to let the Ontario Energy Board do their work. They're an independent arm's-length agency of the government, and that needs to be respected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today one of my constituents, but also a good friend of mine whom I've had the pleasure to work with for a number of years, Ivana Padovan, who is here with her sister, Marisa Padovan, and Giorgio, Andrea, Marco, Valeria and Sofia Bevilacqua, who are here visiting from Italy. Welcome to Queen's Park. Benvenuti.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Buon giorno.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SICKLE CELL AND THALASSEMIC DISORDERS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I recently had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario and the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada. Thanks to these representatives, I learned more about sickle cell disease and thalassemia, two diseases that attack red blood cells.

Healthy red blood cells are essential to health, as these are the cells that provide oxygen to the body. When red blood cells aren't healthy due to sickle cell disease and thalassemia, it can lead to everything from pain to infection, diabetes, heart failure or even organ damage. Thankfully, with regular blood transfusions and proper treatment, most people suffering from these diseases can be treated effectively and with relatively little cost.

Yet there are severe gaps in our health care system which act as barriers to care for people suffering from these diseases, meaning that many people who suffer end up in emergency rooms across the province due to complications from their illness. Even worse, often when they arrive in emergency rooms they have to be transported to hospitals with teams who know how to deal with complications arising from these diseases, and this is costly to patients and to the province.

The problem is that Ontario lacks a coordinated, comprehensive health care strategy for people with these

diseases. The need for a provincial strategy is made even more urgent given that sickle cell disease and thalassemia are the most common genetic conditions in the world and are emerging as significant problems right here in Ontario. This is why I urge my colleagues from all sides of the House to support the creation of a provincial strategy for sickle cell disease and thalassemia. Together, we can ensure that Ontario's health care system is one that we can be proud of, one in which every Ontario citizen can receive the care they need and deserve.

GURU STUDIO

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Guru Studio in my riding of Trinity-Spadina. Guru produces some of the best children's television programming and interactive media in the world. It employs over 200 people from its location on Spadina Avenue in Toronto's former garment district.

Earlier this year, Justin Time, Guru's hit show for preschoolers, was nominated for three Annie Awards for animated programming and won the Canadian Screen Award for best preschool program.

Trinity-Spadina needs employers like Guru Studio. Their success demonstrates to talented young animators and game designers that they don't have to pack up and go to California to build their careers; they can produce world-class work right here in Toronto.

We need to continue investing in this growing sector of our economy. Ontario's supports for employers like Guru have paid huge dividends. We need to nurture their relationships with colleges and universities, and we need to ensure that employers like Guru are not squeezed out from ridings like Trinity-Spadina. Our cities need to have the power to plan for and preserve employment lands.

I would like to thank Guru for their gracious hospitality, and I look forward to their many future successes.

SIKH HERITAGE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Vaisakhi is the holiest day in the Sikh calendar. It commemorates the founding of the Khalsa Sikh community in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

The founding father of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, gave the people a roadmap to live a peaceful and productive life. His main teachings are practised in three ways: vand chakkō, which means sharing with others, helping those less fortunate; kirat karō, which means earning and making a living honestly without exploitation or fraud; and naam japna, meditation on God's name to control your evils to eliminate suffering and contribute overall to a happy life for all.

Mr. Speaker, Sikh Canadians have contributed immensely to Ontario and Canada. Their participation in business and community life has added to the success of our province. For all Canadians, Vaisakhi provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the tremendous contri-

butions that Sikhs have made to this country's rich and diverse heritage.

We're also celebrating Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario. I would like to welcome all members of the Canadian Sikh Association who are here today in the House. I know there are a few, and we have one member. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would like to invite all members of the chamber to join us in the legislative dining room between 5 and 7 this evening to enjoy some South Asian delicacies.

Once again, happy Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi di lakh lakh Vadhai. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Leeds–Grenville.

ORAL HEALTH

Mr. Steve Clark: Before I do my statement, I just want to recognize, seated in the west members' gallery—I know I introduced them this morning, but they are actually right here looking at me, so I want to make sure I recognize them—Dr. Raffy Chouljian, who is on the board of directors of the Ontario Dental Association. I'd like to welcome ODA representatives Frank Bevilacqua and Maggie Head. I also want to make a special introduction to Jennifer Boyd, representing Brush-a-mania. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't worry, that's not your statement. Go ahead.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. This past Friday, I had the opportunity to be part of an Oral Health Month event called Brush-a-mania in my riding at Benson Public School in Cardinal. Dr. Kim Hansen, who is on the ODA's board of directors, and Dr. Lance McIntosh, president of the Brockville Dental Association, had a captive audience as they interacted with the Benson students about the importance of brushing, flossing and a nutritious diet. I was charged with the giant toothbrush, and demonstrated how to brush all sides of the teeth—front, back and top—which also garnered, I have to say, a few giggles from the students. The three-minute brush-off, where students demonstrate their proper brushing habits, was a real hit. A special guest appearance by Timmy the Tooth was definitely a highlight of the brush-off and kept students engaged.

Being a part of this event was a healthy reminder of how important oral health is and its foundation in our overall health. It's important that we protect the smiles of our youth and give them the tools they need to be as healthy as possible and in future. I want to encourage all members of the Legislature to connect with a member of the ODA, and I encourage them to have a Brush-a-mania event in their own riding.

April is Oral Health Month in the province of Ontario, and I was happy to recognize the great work done by dentists across the province, both by participating in Brush-a-mania and in showing my support by adorning the Oral Health Month pin today in the House.

The ODA's message for this year's Oral Health Month is that dentists are the oral health care experts and the best resource patients have for information on achieving excellent oral health, including a healthy smile. I think this is an important message, especially as I see dentists reaching out to our students and building relationships with them from a young age.

Speaker, I'm happy to participate in Brush-a-mania and happy that ODA representatives are here.

RUN FOR ROCKY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It was my extreme pleasure and I was proud this weekend to participate in the second annual Run for Rocky in support of gay-straight alliances in our local Essex county school system. The Run for Rocky was established in honour of Rocky Campana, who tragically took his own life at the age of 23. Rocky was a vibrant, talented and loving young man. Rocky was also gay. He experienced hardships and discrimination as he struggled to fit into a society that was not always welcoming and understanding. Although his family were supportive and loving of who Rocky was, they could not ease the pain that he felt.

Upon Rocky's death, the Campana family were subject to one final act of discrimination when Rocky's organs were excluded from being donated because Rocky was a gay man. In an amazing display of strength and love, Rocky's family have made it their mission to raise awareness about this discriminatory practice and also to raise funds for local gay-straight alliances.

Although the tally has not been finalized, based on the \$68,000 they raised in the first year, and the increased support of numbers of corporate sponsors and participants this year, I have no doubt that this year's event was incredibly successful.

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I want to thank Rob and Nancy Campana and Rocky's siblings, Kirsten and Connor, and their extended family for an amazing event and for inspiring people to run for Rocky in support of those in our communities who require that support, and gay-straight alliances in our school system.

ORAL HEALTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, April is Oral Health Month, and to recognize this, dentists embark on public awareness campaigns across Canada. Here in Ontario, Brush-a-mania was designed to promote oral health awareness among young children. Every April, local dentists and Rotarians visit schools across Ontario to teach children and youth about the importance of brushing, flossing and a nutritious diet.

On April 4, I attended Brush-a-mania, sponsored by the Don Mills Rotary Club, held at Silver Springs Public School, with my good friends Dr. Raffy Chouljian and Jennifer Boyd. Dr. Raffy is the chair of Brush-a-mania and sits on the Ontario Dental Association board of direc-

tors, and led the oral health education portion with the students at the school.

I've been attending Brush-a-mania for over 10 years, as I am a strong believer in this program. I know how important it is to reach and educate children at a young age on the significance of maintaining good oral health.

Students also participate in the Brush-a-mania challenge contest, which encourages them to track their brushing progress for 30 days.

Brush-a-mania has already reached over 400,000 students since it first began in 2001, and the plan is to continue to partner with dental associations and governments across Canada and internationally to promote April as Oral Health Month.

I want to acknowledge Dr. Raffy, the ODA dentists, Rotarians, teachers and parents who come together to support this wonderful initiative.

PASSOVER

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all of those who will be celebrating Passover in Ontario, Canada and all around the world.

As Jewish families sit down for the Passover Seder, they will retell the story of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt after hundreds of years of slavery.

In addition, for the next eight days, they will eat matzo—unleavened bread that looks and tastes like a cracker—to remind them that when they fled Egypt, they did not even have time to bake their bread properly. So we can make one less pizza at the cafeteria next door.

A celebration of freedom and hope, Passover serves as a reminder that the freedoms we, in Ontario, cherish must never be taken for granted.

From our PC family to yours, I want to wish everyone celebrating a Chag Pesach Kasher v'Sameach.

FABIO BELLI

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Unfortunately, I stand today to inform the House of the sudden passing of one of Sudbury's civic leaders. Fabio Belli, ward 8 councillor, was only 37 years old when he shockingly and suddenly passed away this weekend. He is survived by his wife, Susan, an elementary school teacher, and his two young, beautiful daughters, Emma and Brianna.

Fabio was a bright star in the city of Greater Sudbury's political universe, being elected in 2010. A successful businessman, he brought a business sense to council. He was a hard worker, always advocating for causes important to the people of Sudbury. He understood that development creates jobs. He understood that an active community network made for a better neighbourhood. He understood that our mighty Sudbury Wolves need a new arena to play in.

Aside from the political influences in his life, he most loved his wife, his children and his family. His family was his life.

He will be greatly missed, but his star will still shine brightly, and we will continue to be inspired by the person known as Fabio Belli.

Our sympathies go out to his family, his friends, our community and city council.

Rest in peace, my friend.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to just say, Mr. Speaker, that my statement is on the Kemptville closure, the satellite campus of Guelph University.

After a tremendous outcry from the residents of Northumberland—Quinte West via email, phone calls and also personal visits, I quickly reacted and immediately organized a meeting at the Codrington Community Centre to listen to the compassion and the need of the alumni in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. I have to thank the member from Leeds—Grenville, who came down that busy Saturday, along with the alumni from Kemptville college, to express a deep concern that they have with the closure of Kemptville college by the University of Guelph and this government.

We need to remember that there are close to 700 students who go to Kemptville college and are trained in the expertise of running agri-business and working family farms. For those individuals who are not aware, agriculture is the second-largest employer in the province of Ontario, with upwards of 160,000 people working in that sector who put food on our table every day.

The Kemptville college campus is very important to the people of Northumberland—Quinte West, and I want to thank again the member from Leeds—Grenville, and the hard work that Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are doing for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SIKH HERITAGE

Hon. Michael Coteau: It is my privilege to be the first Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to recognize April as Sikh Heritage Month here in the beautiful province of Ontario, a month in which we celebrate the significant contributions of the Sikh community here in our province.

Sikhs in Ontario have strengthened our province and distinguished themselves in virtually every field and profession. Ontarians admire their solid work ethic, faith and spirituality, love of family, and strong commitment to democracy.

Across Ontario this month, the story of Sikh immigration to Ontario and the community's growth will be told and retold in events and exhibitions.

Sikhs were initially attracted to Ontario by our free and diverse community and society, and they continue to come because of the success and opportunity that have followed them here. This is the beauty of Ontario's diversity. We come from over 200 countries and we speak more than 250 languages. People are free to express themselves, practise their beliefs, celebrate their heritage and build strong communities. This is the Ontario way, and it has been the reason we have attracted so many immigrants from so many countries over the years.

Today, April 14, is also known as Vaisakhi Day in Ontario and around the world. Vaisakhi is an important date in Sikh history. It was on this day in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh laid the foundation for the Khalsa order and the founding of Sikhism. The distinct identity of Sikhs and the code of conduct by which they go about their daily lives also dates back to the very first Vaisakhi Day.

For hundreds of thousands of Sikhs in Ontario, this is a both a holy time and a celebratory time. Members of our Sikh communities mark Vaisakhi with prayer and music, singing and dancing, parades and delicious food offerings.

In Ontario, we recognize and celebrate our differences. We're proud and pleased to celebrate both Vaisakhi and April as Sikh Heritage Month with the Sikh community that has so strengthened this great province.

Remarks in Punjabi.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

1320

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise to celebrate both Sikh Heritage Month and Vaisakhi on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus. I would also like to welcome a number of guests to the Legislature, as we have a big celebration happening at 4:30 this afternoon down in the dining room. Manohar Singh Bal, the secretary of the Canadian Sikh Association, is here in our west members' gallery, and also Baljit Singh Ghuman, Kanwaljit Kaur and Jenny Kaur Gill. They have been here throughout the day today, and I know they'll be here when we celebrate a little bit later on this afternoon.

We celebrate the fact that in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh laid down the foundation of the Khalsa. Vaisakhi is now a celebration by the Sikh community around the world. It gives thanks and allows for prayers for prosperity, both past and into the future. In Ontario, we've celebrated Vaisakhi with the Nagar Kirtans, and I had the opportunity to parade through downtown Toronto last April. It's now a celebration that has become an integral part of who we are in the greater Toronto area and right across the province. I was proud last year to take part in my first Nagar Kirtans, and this year I'll be very pleased to have some of my family members joining me as well as we make the long walk from Exhibition Place to Nathan Phillips Square at Toronto city hall for the big celebration.

Our celebration of Vaisakhi inspired this Legislature to unanimously pass Sikh Heritage Month last year. We

ensured that every April would be a chance for us to embrace the multicultural spirit that has given rise to a vibrant and growing Sikh community here in Ontario. I was honoured, actually, to support the motion that was brought forward by our House leader from Simcoe-Grey, Jim Wilson, that helped push the recognition of Sikh Heritage Month through the House on that day just prior to Christmas last year. As a matter of fact, it was part of a bill where two private members' bills moved forward and eventually received royal assent. The other was a bill brought forward by our member from Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees, instigating and initiating First Responders Day on May 1 every year. So on May Day we'll have First Responders Day.

Over the last couple of years, I've gotten to know a number of Sikh Canadians—actually, hundreds of them. And one of them I want to bring a special mention of because of the passage of First Responders Day and Sikh Heritage Month and Vaisakhi: Gary Atwal, who's actually a turban-wearing Sikh who is a member of the Peel Region Police Service. He'll be celebrating both of the private members' bills that we passed prior to Christmas.

Tomorrow we'll celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Guru Nanak Dev Ji's spiritual journey to Sikhism took him on many sacred journeys across the globe, to places like India, central Asia and the Middle East, including Mecca. Throughout these journeys, Nanak Ji preached the then-considered radical ideologies—they were considered radical ideologies at one time—of equality for all, regardless of their caste, creed, sex, religion or stature in the community. It was through these beginnings that Guru Nanak Dev Ji's great spiritual legacy and preaching led to the faith that we now call Sikhism.

We know from all accounts that the future of this province is highly dependent on our ability to embrace all comers to our province. We have established traditions and declarations like Sikh Heritage Month every April, to demonstrate that Ontario is a place that everyone can call home. We take this moment and this Vaisakhi to extend our prayers for future prosperity alongside those of our Sikh brothers and sisters in the GTA and right across our province. Our shared future is our children, and we must do everything that we can to make sure that Ontario is a place where they can grow and become prosperous and have a very bright future.

Again, I hope that all members of the Legislature will join us in the dining room alongside our leader, Tim Hudak. I know the leaders of the other two parties will be there as well as we celebrate Vaisakhi and we celebrate the very first Sikh Heritage Month in the province of Ontario. It happens at 4:30. As we heard earlier, there will be lots of delicacies there to celebrate as well. Congratulations on this, the first Sikh Heritage Month in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Before I get into my formal remarks, I want to extend my thanks to everyone today for speaking on Sikh Heritage Month, and particularly for the support from all parties in order to pass my private

member's bill. It wouldn't have been possible without your support, so I thank you all for that.

I also want to acknowledge the fact that one of the things that I had hoped for and that my team had dreamed of was that in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, people from each party would get up and talk about the contributions of the Sikh faith or the Sikh community as a way of shedding some light and some awareness on the community that all too often receives a lot of negative attention and also receives a lot of stigma. Today was a really meaningful and very special moment for me—to hear people from each party get up today, representatives from each party, representatives in this House, to speak on the contributions of the community and to talk about the faith. It really means a lot to me, and I really want to acknowledge that from the bottom of my heart as little Jagmeet Singh growing up in Windsor, facing a lot of racism and facing a lot of prejudice. It feels like I've come a long way, and I know members of my community feel the same way, so it's a really special moment today. Thank you for that.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yay, Windsor!

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yay, Windsor.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge that there's a cultural celebration that happens this month, and that's the cultural celebration of Vaisakhi. It's a celebration that's enjoyed by members of all faiths—folks of a Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian background in Punjab and throughout northern South Asia. But to distinguish from that, the Khalsa Day celebration that we talked about today is a specific part of that celebration. It is a recognition of the formalization of the Sikh faith and particularly our unique concepts and principles at that time. Some of them were alluded to today.

One of the most important and foundational principles in the Sikh faith is the idea of equality and that we all have a moral obligation and responsibility to defend the rights of all people. Despite the fact that some people may have different opinions, the foundational principle of the Sikh faith is that we must stand up for those rights of all people, regardless of whether or not we believe or agree with them. But it's important, for freedom of religion and for freedom of expression, that we stand up and defend the rights.

I have to share with you one brief story. The ninth guru, or teacher, of the Sikh faith was actually approached by members of a different religion altogether—in fact, a religious practice that the guru criticized often in terms of some of their beliefs that were something that he didn't agree with in terms of equality and in terms of the caste system. But when approached with the question, "Can you help us? We're being persecuted. We are being denied the ability to practise our faith," the ninth guru actually engaged in a peaceful protest that resulted in his death in defence of a spiritual tradition that he didn't agree with and that he didn't actually believe in. He died defending it because it's so important, as our principle, to stand up for the rights of all people.

One of our hopes was that if people were to realize this tradition that believes in freedom of expression and freedom of belief to that extent, to give their life in a peaceful protest to defend the freedoms of all people, people wouldn't have the prejudice that they do have towards the image of a Sikh, who is often seen with a beard and turban and in sometimes a negative light. That's something I wanted to share with you as well.

One of the things that I think is of particularly great importance and I'm very proud of is that if you look at the climate in South Asia, not only was there a caste system which denied people rights and obligations based on their birth, but there was also a very strong culture that persists today, across the world, of sexism, where women were put in an inferior position and continue to be, not just in South Asia but across the world, in western society as well. One of the hallmarks of the Sikh faith was this belief—not only to say it but in practice—that women and men should enjoy equal responsibilities, privileges and rights, and should be accorded equal access in all areas—whether it's socially, whether it's spiritually—in all aspects of life. That's something I'm very proud of. I'm very close to my sister and my mother, and they taught me these principles growing up. It's something I'm very proud of because, in our society, it's something we still need to work towards. We still see a lot of inequality and inequity. The struggle for equal rights for men and women is something that I'm hoping that there will be a day when it will be successful and we will see a society where there is absolute equality. That's one of our hallmarks and one of the things I wanted to celebrate today when we talk about the creation of the Khalsa, which is exactly that: the creation of an order or an organization or a belief structure which champions social justice for all.

I want to thank you all again for your help in passing Sikh Heritage Month. It means a lot to the Sikh community. It also means a lot to celebrate these principles that are Canadian principles: principles of equality and justice that we all stand for in our lives.

1330

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the

knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

It's signed by literally hundreds of members. I'm pleased to sign it and send it to the table with page Mira.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a real privilege for me to stand in the House today and raise a petition that is not only important to my constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh but also to the Alzheimer Society of Windsor and Essex County as well as similar societies right across this caring province. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and is only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I fully support this petition, affix my name and ask page Nick to bring it to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which, as you know, is an exercise in moral suasion. It reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures."

A petition endorsed by Todd Decker, Clerk, and sent to you by Anthony, page.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize

testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my signature in support.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has approved a 40% increase in Enbridge Gas rates effective April 1, 2014;

"Whereas the government of Premier Kathleen Wynne has not taken action to ensure affordability of natural gas in Ontario;

"Whereas the provincial government has contributed to higher costs of natural gas by its own policy on purchasing natural gas for electricity generating stations required to supplement wind and solar" inefficient plants;

"Whereas an increase averaging \$400 in annual gas bills is a hardship for all Ontarians, but especially seniors on fixed pensions and families and individuals of modest means;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the provincial government recognize that heat and hydro are essential commodities for Ontario," and must be respected by the province;

"We, the undersigned, further ask that the provincial government immediately investigate the 40% increase, take action to ensure temporary increases caused by an exceptionally cold winter do not become permanent, and also ensure affordability of natural gas for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Jane, one of the pages, on her last week.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai une pétition ici adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario—an exercise in moral suasion, as you know, Speaker:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-

point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures," as do I—and send it to you via page Zohaib.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper *Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy*;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Kathryn.

1340

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition signed by residents of Scarborough—Guildwood.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, on June 11, 2013, Toronto city council passed a motion requesting a ranked ballot for municipal elections; and

“Whereas Bill 166 will strengthen local democracy within the city of Toronto;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014 which was introduced by Mitzie Hunter, MPP (Scarborough–Guildwood) and passed second reading on March 6, 2014.”

I will sign this petition and give it to page Nick.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the University of Guelph’s Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario’s outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

“Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region’s agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

“Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph’s short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Mustfah.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—an exercise in moral suasion, as you know, Speaker.

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.”

Je vais la signer moi-même, Speaker, et je vous l’envoie avec page Callista.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

Wouldn’t that be nice? I’m signing this and sending it to the table.

VEHICLE INSPECTION STATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is proposing to relocate the Bowmanville truck inspection station on westbound Highway 401 to a site that could affect prime agriculture and agri-tourism lands in the municipality of Clarington; and

“Whereas the proposed sites are on the greenbelt, and these farmlands currently support a vibrant farming and agri-tourism business community; and

“Whereas farmers feed cities, and tourism helps drive the local economy; and

“Whereas the building of a new commercial vehicle inspection station could have a severely detrimental and negative impact on farms, agribusiness and rural communities; and

“Whereas the building of a new commercial vehicle inspection station could have a severely detrimental and negative impact on rural residents, residents of the village of Newcastle, businesses, and the Newcastle Public School located adjacent to Highway 401;

“Now therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect prime farmland and the local economy by ensuring a new commercial vehicle inspection station built on Highway 401 in the municipality of Clarington does not adversely affect farms, agri-tourism, agribusiness and rural residents;

“Furthermore, we recommend that the existing Bowmanville site be redeveloped” to save money and “to accommodate the new vehicle inspection guidelines, with the least amount of disruption and cost.”

I'm pleased to sign it and support it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and I present it to Eli.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The time for petitions is over.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to correct my record by including also an invitation to everyone to join the Canadian Sikh Association for their reception at 4:30 today, and also to acknowledge the Canadian Sikh Association for being here today, which I was unable to do in my statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is a point of order to correct your record, but that is not a correcting of the record. But we'll welcome everyone to the reception.

The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent that the House now revert back to motions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to revert back to motions. Do we agree? Agreed.

MOTIONS

HOUSE AND COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the House schedule.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, following oral questions or deferred votes, as the case may be, on Wednesday, April 16, 2014, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion, and the House shall stand adjourned until Thursday, April 17, 2014; and

That no committees shall meet following oral questions or deferred votes, as the case may be, on Wednesday, April 16, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, following oral questions or deferred votes, as the case may be, on Wednesday, April 16, 2014—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm reading it here, so do you mind?

Mr. Milloy moves that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful.

Mr. Milloy moves that, following oral questions or deferred votes, as the case may be, on Wednesday, April 16, 2014, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion, and the House shall stand adjourned until Thursday, April 17, 2014, and

That no committees shall meet following oral questions or deferred votes, as the case may be, on Wednesday, April 16, 2014.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding House proceedings for this Thursday, April 17, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98, at the commencement of orders of the day on Thursday, April 17, 2014, consideration of private members' public business shall resume at the same stage of consideration of ballot items 4, 5 and 6 as when proceedings were suspended on Thursday, April 10, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98, at the commencement of orders of the day on Thursday, April 17, 2014, consideration of private members' public business shall resume at the same stage of consideration of ballot items 4, 5 and 6 as when proceedings were suspended on Thursday, April 10, 2014.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader wishes to put a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr. MacLaren and Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. MacLaren assumes ballot item number 10 and Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 5.

1350

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot item list for private members' public business: Mr. MacLaren and Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. MacLaren assumes ballot item number 10 and Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 5.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader wishes to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs meet during its regularly scheduled meeting time on Thursday, April 17, 2014, in order to continue its public hearings on Bill 20, An Act respecting the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board, that was adjourned on Thursday, April 10, 2014;

That the Clerk of the Committee make every attempt to reschedule the selected witnesses who were unable to present on Thursday, April 10, 2014;

That clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 20 be scheduled for May 1, 2014;

That the deadline for written submissions on Bill 20 be 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 17, 2014;

That a summary of the testimonies be provided by the research officer to the committee by Tuesday, April 22, 2014; and

That amendments to Bill 20 be filed with the Clerk of the Committee by 12 noon on Monday, April 28, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs meet during its regularly scheduled meeting time on Thursday April 17, 2014, in order to continue its public hearings on Bill 20, An Act respecting the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board, that was adjourned on Thursday April 10, 2014;

That the Clerk of the Committee make every attempt to reschedule the selected witnesses who were unable to present on Thursday, April 10, 2014;

That clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 20 be scheduled for May 1, 2014;

That the deadline for written submissions on Bill 20 be 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 17, 2014;

That a summary of the testimonies be provided by the research officer to the committee by Tuesday, April 22, 2014; and

That amendments to Bill 20 be filed with the Clerk of the Committee by 12 noon on Monday, April 28, 2014.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DON DE SANG VOLONTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 3, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely/ Projet de loi 178, Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

FIGHTING FRAUD AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens/ Projet de loi 171, Loi concernant les réformes du système d'assurance et le privilège des réparateurs et des entreposeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I do—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please. We did have a member of the PC caucus that had time left. He's not here, so I have to offer the rotation.

The member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and address Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014. A more accurate title might be the "Christmas comes early for the insurance companies act." This is an act in which the government is proposing to hand out another gift to huge insurance companies, at the expense of all auto insurance policyholders and accident victims.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you that on Friday I had a constituent come in to see me, a woman on a fixed income, dealing with auto insurance and home insurance, who has seen her bills go up 16% in the last year, although she has no record of difficulty with her driving, no tickets and no demerits. This is a person who had followed very closely the earlier commitment by the Liberal government to bring about a reduction in insurance rates. In reality, she is being hit with a big increase.

The insurance industry is taking advantage of its powerful position in dealing with government and in dealing with its policyholders. Frankly it's going to be given a lot more in terms of power and advantage with a number of changes in this bill.

While there are many good ideas in Justice Cunningham's final report on the dispute resolution system that forms the basis for the legislative changes, there's one glaring deficiency in the proposed new system, and that's denying accident victims access to the courts. In the name of cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens and to replace the courts with a tribunal.

The second issue is that Bill 171 would change a 30-year-old rule that has been so important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. Under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing automobile insurance rates, this measure was presented as a money-saving initiative for insurers.

Clearly, the change in the interest rate has nothing to do with fighting fraud. It should be obvious for everyone: If an insurance company is being given a preferential interest rate on potential expenses that it may incur when it pays out for pain and suffering—there is nothing here to do with fraud whatsoever. One has to ask, "Why on earth is that part of the bill?" Only because this government has decided to play Santa with the insurance industry. In reality, this change is nothing more than a gift to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector on top of the recent substantial cuts to statutory benefits that have

already netted insurance companies \$2 billion-plus in savings.

Let me go to the background on this. Currently, accident victims have the right to go to court or to arbitration to dispute a wrongful denial. But under the proposed legislation, the right to sue will be taken away entirely and require claimants to advance claims to the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General. This is denial to access to justice for Ontarians when they are most vulnerable due to injury.

We've been fortunate in Ontario, with open courts and with the right of citizens to seek redress in the courts for wrongs committed by others and for denial of benefits by insurance companies. It is false to suggest that this will provide cost savings to the insurance industry and reduce insurance premiums.

Let's look at how the dispute resolution system will work under this new legislation. An accident victim will take this case to a new arbitration system. While that new system may be appropriate to handle many of the disputes in the system, it certainly is not appropriate for all of them. One of the significant disadvantages of this new system is that if the accident victim is successful in proving that the insurance company should have paid the claim benefit, the insurance company is forced to pay only a tiny fraction of the legal costs, unlike the court system, leaving the policyholder to pay those costs. If the accident victim is injured and it was someone else's fault, the victim now has to pay a lawyer to bring two entirely different cases: one in court against the person who injured you, and this new arbitration against your insurance company who denied your benefits. The accident victim now has huge extra-legal costs and two different legal proceedings, one in the court system and one in the arbitration system.

1400

I ask you: How does this prevent fraud? Who does this help? This has everything to do with making life better for insurance companies and making life harder for policyholders, making life harder for people who have been involved in traffic accidents. None of these changes has anything to do with fraud, but everything to do with making it easier for insurance companies to wrongfully deny benefits, delay settlements and make it harder for you to collect what you're rightly owed.

We know that our insurance system right now is very complex. It makes it very difficult for people to access the benefits that they are reasonably entitled to. This proposed change will make sure that more victims just give up because they can't afford the fight. That's wrong, it's unjust, and it has nothing to do with fighting fraud. It has everything to do with discouraging people from actually trying to collect on their policies.

The question of prejudgment interest: Bill 171 would change a 30-year-old rule that has been so important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages.

Basically, it ensures timely payment for pain and suffering damages by insurance companies to innocent victims.

Currently, insurance companies are required to pay 5% interest on whatever you are owed for pain and suffering. So if you have a serious injury and you are owed \$50,000 for pain and suffering and the insurance company delays paying for three years, they have to pay \$7,500 in interest. It's not a lot, but it's something to compensate those whose cases have been delayed and it serves as an important incentive for insurers not to purposely delay settlement of a claim. Insurers invest the money that people pay in premiums, and, according to the federal regulator, they made about 4% per year on these investments in 2012. So if the provisions in this bill are passed and the prejudgment interest rate is reduced to 1.3%, the insurance companies stand to earn 2.7% profit on your money for every year that they put off settling with you. How does this prevent fraud?

What it means is that companies will have a tremendous incentive to settle as late as they possibly can because they are making money on the cash that they owe victims of accidents. This is a huge step back. This is a disadvantage to those in Ontario who are victims of accidents and a huge gift to those who are making money off their policies.

The amendments were introduced under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing automobile insurance rates, but in fact, they were money-saving initiatives for the insurance companies. Clearly, the change in the interest rate has nothing to do with fighting fraud. In reality, this change is nothing more than a gift to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector, on top of the recent substantial cuts to benefits that have already netted insurance companies billions of dollars in profits. It is another unfortunate legislative initiative of late, introduced without any consultation or any consideration for auto accident victims.

Let's be clear: There was not one shred of evidence provided to any stakeholder to explain how much, if anything, this is going to reduce insurance premiums. But it is going to cost people money and put a lot more money into the pockets of insurance companies. In reality, this change is nothing more than another gift to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector on top of the recent substantial cuts to benefits that have netted insurance companies billions of dollars in savings.

It will be very interesting to see how the government ties this to fraud, this failure to put an incentive in place for insurance companies to settle with victims, this moving of jurisdiction out of the courts, and thus the protection of the legal system for those who are accident victims.

I don't think there is a credible answer to those questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As so often happens in this House, there is a little bit of truth in what's being said,

but there's usually an overstatement as to what the real intent of the prejudgment interest situation is.

The reality is that prejudgment interest should be on the basis of the amount the judgment would have earned as you went along. In most situations, it would have to be the cost of living, Speaker. It has been set at 5% for the last 20 years, when the real interest rate that people are earning on their money on an ongoing basis is more in the line of 2% or 3%. I think any prejudgment interest should be in exactly the same proportion as the cost-of-living interest for that particular period of time. So that's one issue.

If the amount of money that's being granted for pain and suffering is not enough, then that is the issue. If it shouldn't be the \$50,000 that he's talking about and it should be \$60,000, that's where the correction should be made; not by giving the individual more money than he otherwise would have been able to earn on that amount, by taking an artificial interest rate of 5% that has been around for 20 years on the amount of the judgment.

I think the main criteria that's contained in this bill comes out of Justice Douglas Cunningham's report with respect to getting resolutions to disputes on automobile insurance claims dealt with earlier. What he has recommended—and that is actually part of the bill—is that the resolutions be the responsibility of a tribunal administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General; namely, the Licence Appeal Tribunal. They can deal with these issues a lot quicker and a lot fairer than is currently the case. That's really what this bill is all about: so that people can get judgments earlier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: To the member for Toronto-Danforth: I have great deference for his comments today.

The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has said that enough has been said on this; we need to get it to committee. It's in that vein that I'm not using all of my time, to complement your remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I think what we're finding with Bill 171 is that it's doing nothing to fight fraud. There's nothing in this bill that's going to help reduce insurance rates.

It has a great title: Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates. Speaker, New Democrats fought really hard to get a 15% reduction for Ontarians on their auto insurance. To date, we have not seen that 15% come to light. We are still waiting for it. Some people are actually seeing increases. So when they come up with great titles, it's all fine and dandy to say that we're talking about reducing rates, but in reality we're not seeing that at all. I haven't found anything in this bill that's actually going to help the auto insurance rates in this province.

The previous speaker, the member from Toronto-Danforth, talked about this being Christmas for the insurance companies, and I think he's absolutely right. It's definitely Christmas-come-early for insurance providers,

because it doesn't look to me like there's anything in this bill that's going to reduce rates for the premiums payers. It looks like it's going to be a lot more money going back into the insurance industry. We know that that happened in 2010, where they were already putting themselves \$2 billion to the good, and now they're just going to do that again. As the member from Trinity-Spadina would say, God bless.

We think this is really great for the insurance industry but not so great for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 171. I believe that this bill is a direct reflection of the changes that are required in the sector in terms of reducing auto insurance. Our commitment to reduce auto insurance by 15%: We are well on our way, already achieving a 5% reduction. I've been out speaking to residents in my community, and they have voluntarily told me that their insurance rates have come down. I think that's very important for them to see that. Others have also told me that they have a higher rate, and they're concerned about that. I definitely encourage them to speak to their broker, and also to compare companies, because there are companies that are competing in this insurance market that are offering lower rates. It is really important for consumers to take those matters and really speak to their brokers about a reduction in their rate.

1410

I also feel that, in the area of fraud and how we fight fraud—there's a seriousness about fraud. Having a special investigative unit and prosecution unit that specializes in this area, and that can really fight on behalf of consumers, is also very important and will serve to remove and avoid those costs in the system in the first place. We know that we have to work together, and we have to really combat fraud. Having this very targeted unit is going to help to do that and drive costs out of the system, so that we don't see those inflated rates.

I know that's very important to people in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. I talk to many, many people about this issue of insurance, and I appreciate the work on Bill 171.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Toronto-Danforth for his reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank those who made their comments: the member from Durham for his very brief but very complimentary words.

To my colleague from Hamilton Mountain: She's quite correct. This bill is not fighting fraud; people in my riding, and apparently hers, are not seeing any rate reductions.

I want to speak to the comments from the member from Kingston and the member from Scarborough-Guildwood. Neither of them addressed this issue: how companies are being given an incentive to hold back on payments, because they can start making money on those payments that are not given over to the policyholder, the

victim of an accident. If, in fact, those insurance companies are making 4% interest on the money that they are investing, then an interest rate of 1.3% that they're going to pay in penalties coming back to policyholders means that they have a huge incentive to hold on to the money for as long as possible.

Payment delayed is payment denied. Many people have low incomes and are struggling to get by; when a company says to them, "We are just going to sweat you out and wait you out," many will be compelled to settle for a lower dollar amount because they can't afford to wait. They need the money to get on with their lives.

Neither the member from Scarborough-Guildwood nor Kingston said anything about how this is actually going to fight fraud.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Fighting fraud? No. This is a way of putting the heat on people who have been through an accident, whose lives have been disrupted and who may well be dealing with a permanent disability, and yet the insurance companies are going to get the benefit of their payments withheld.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity to say a few words about Bill 171, the proposed legislation on insurance, repair and storage liens. I sat on the board of an insurance company for a number of years. This is a very important business. This is something that should really not lie in the realm of quick politics or short-order politics. I think it's very important.

I echo the sentiments of my colleague earlier this afternoon: This has to go to committee. It has got to go to committee before any election comes along. We have to give consumers, companies, brokers, appraisers and anyone else concerned with this industry—to have their say. It should not lie just in the Legislative Assembly or just out on the hustings during an election.

I mentioned sitting on a board. I was on the board of Norfolk Mutual. It's one of probably 40 of the original farm mutuals across the province of Ontario. I know our neighbouring mutuals Brant and Oxford, and, just in my riding alone, in addition to Norfolk Mutual, we had Cayuga Mutual, Wabisa, Erie, and Townsend Farmers' Mutual. Many of these companies have been around for well over 100 years. They do not fit the stereotype of an insurance company that I just heard described by a previous speaker. They are well run. They are not-for-profit companies. They're not a stock company. They're shareholder-owned. On the board, we were there to serve the insurance purchasers who were also shareholders in the company. That was our job.

My colleague Jeff Yurek, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, has done tremendous work on this. As he would point out, if you go back in time, you see, in recent times, every time an election looms, insurance gets put on the agenda. We recognize the complicated bureaucracy, the regulation involved, the fraud—something I wish to talk about this afternoon. As a result, we've got

the highest insurance costs in Canada. Last year, again, specifically to try and prevent an election, we saw this promise, a Liberal promise, for a 15% reduction in rates, propped up by the NDP at that time—just to prevent an election.

When you have that kind of what I consider a very significant intervention in the marketplace, to my mind it flies in the face of basic economics. Normally, price is a function of supply and demand. A mandated 15% cut, an intervention of that nature—especially when it results in drastic measures by companies to scramble to try and cut costs. But at the same time, the stock companies have to make a profit; they have to pay their help.

I want to read a quote from Phil Howell, CEO of FSCO. He says: “So any move that required all companies to cut rates I think would be a very dangerous move. As well as that, I think you would find situations where people would just have” less choice for “insurance”—these are my words: “less choice”—“and perhaps be forced into the” Facility Association. As a result they pay “much higher rates.” That is not in the best interest of the consumer—again, one more reason why this has to go to committee as soon as possible.

Some of the providers walk away. State Farm has sold its property and casualty business in Canada, and they cited auto; the auto insurance market is the reason. The state of New Jersey promised to cut rates by 15% in 1998. Many companies left the market at that time. So what happens? Auto becomes very difficult to obtain. The rates did go down by 15% over two years, but here is where supply comes in. The lack of availability eventually led to a spike of 27% in people’s premiums in New Jersey by the year 2000; here it is, two years later. So, again, the economic laws of declining supply and rising prices kick in.

Let’s look at what else has happened. We’re told by our critic that bad drivers are getting the biggest discounts. The biggest winners are those insured by the non-standard insurers. These are the companies that look after the worst drivers, the ones with a number of accidents, drinking and driving convictions. Some of the companies, again, with their respective rate reductions, for example: Perth Insurance, a 15% reduction; Pafco, 14.5% down; and Echelon General, an 8.7% decrease.

As I mentioned earlier, one way to cut insurance costs is to cut fraud. We advocate for the recommendations coming from the anti-fraud task force. This was done about a year and a half ago, with something like 30 recommendations. With the implementation of some of these ideas, we’re looking at something like \$1.5 billion that can be reduced on the cost or the overhead of insurance—again, reductions in premiums.

1420

The Minister of Finance now says he wants to institute a special fraud unit, but each time that we brought up this idea, this government said it was not a good idea. Somehow, obviously, they have changed their mind a bit on that one. Again, we’ve been talking about fraud pretty well from day one on this file, and we would like to see a

special unit established through the unit of crown attorneys to investigate and prosecute fraud. That was used in New Jersey, and it worked in Britain as well, so it can work in the province of Ontario.

Quite recently, I received a communication from Ralph Palumbo. He represents the Insurance Bureau of Canada. He was talking about fraud. He indicated that Bill 171 would lead to reduced premiums and reduce the opportunity for those in the “car accident business”—in other words, the fraudsters—to unduly profit from the benefits available in the current system. Mr. Palumbo recognizes that the bill will also reduce unreasonable storage costs for vehicles damaged in motor vehicle collisions, again reducing the ability of the fraudsters to charge exorbitant storage rates; again, this can lead to lower costs and lower premiums.

This amendment to the Repair and Storage Liens Act in this legislation is designed to do just that. The issue here is that vehicles that are involved in collisions may be taken to storage facilities where the charges kick in immediately. The problem is that the owner may not be aware of this. The present legislation allows the facility to hold a vehicle for 60 days before notifying the owner. Again, the 60-day period is expired and then you’re notified.

The anti-fraud task force cited in their report, “In some cases a daily rate of up to a thousand dollars has been charged” to the owners of vehicles. They proposed that an amendment is required to reduce this kind of unscrupulous storage activity.

KPMG has an estimate on fraud; it ranges from \$768 million to \$1.56 billion. That works out to between \$116 and \$236 per premium paid in the province of Ontario.

In the GTA alone, the problem is much more severe. The anti-fraud task force noted that 83% of the increase in accident benefit costs in Ontario between 2006 and 2010 occurred in the GTA. However, the MTO reported significant decreases in the number of reported vehicle accidents. How do you square this? Accident rates are on the decline—this is in the GTA—yet the cost of accident benefits continues to increase. Again, I point the finger at fraud on that one.

I’ll just make mention that fraudulent health clinics, again in the GTA, have also been cited as a key driver of fraud-related costs. Oftentimes these clinics are nothing more than a front for the larger fraud rings. In 2012, the OPP arrested something like 65 people involved in these fraud rings. So you’ve got a system; it’s based on phony injuries, phony clinics, phony treatment. Everything is fraudulent. It tips into that area as well.

Some of our answers to this: obviously, a crackdown on fraud; more competition in the industry; reducing the unnecessary bureaucracy. You cut costs; you cut premiums.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member from Haldimand—Norfolk, whom I respect very much. He has quite a level-headed

demeanour, I think, in this House, and I appreciate his ideas.

He did make reference to the insurance industry and its correlations to supply-side economics, obviously the basis of global economies where supply and demand dictate the price. I would submit that he spoke more about the nature of trickle-down economics rather than supply-side economics.

The premise of Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, is to make sure that insurance companies are more profitable and thus, hopefully, through the hope of this Legislature—not any formal legislative mechanisms, but just our own desire and dreams that insurance companies will then feel compelled, on the basis of their being more profitable, because of it being easier for them to fight claims in a new mechanism that is outside of the courts, in a tribunal rather than through the legal system—that they will become even more profitable and, therefore, reduce the premiums that drivers will have to pay. I say: Wow, when has that happened in the past, when you have increased the benefits on the insurance company side, when you've increased their profit margins by lowering their liabilities to drivers when it came to paying out claims? When has that happened? You've made them more profitable, but we certainly have not seen the converse of that action, when insurers and claimants have to actually receive benefits. It doesn't happen, and it won't work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: First of all, as many members opposite have quite rightly cited, to deal with the insurance industry and all its various players—whether it's the victims, the individuals who've suffered loss, the insurers, industry players, medical doctors—is quite a beast. We agree with that.

I think it's important that we move Bill 171 forward. There are, of course, a number of aspects, as you'll know. We're already en route to the 5% reduction of insurance premiums since August.

One thing I would also speak to very directly is this issue of licensing health service providers that bill the auto insurers. I think this is an area that requires not only scrutiny, but also some measured enforcement. As a physician, I do see, hear of, hear through the grapevine of a number of service providers who may not be serving the people of Ontario optimally. There is, unfortunately, Speaker, a lot of overbilling, a lot of fraud that we need to address, and I think Bill 171 is attempting to deal with at least some of those aspects. We need to get it to committee and pass it right away.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I couldn't let the opportunity go by without complimenting my member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I, like he, believe that the Farmers' Mutual group he spoke to represents the real views of this caucus.

I think the NDP should do a service and get this to committee so we can get on with doing the important business of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and his response to this bill.

Speaker, a number of us here have pointed out, and it is entirely the case, that significant parts of this bill will do nothing to deal with fraud; are going to in fact deliver a substantial gift and reduction of financial burden to the insurance companies, with no requirement that they pass those on to policyholders, that they pass them on to the public.

As I had an opportunity to say earlier, the reduction in the requirement to pay interest on delayed settlements is an incredible incentive for insurance companies to delay as long as possible. If they are making a spread of 2% or even 3% profit on every dollar that they hold back, then they will do everything in their power to stall, to sandbag, to slow down, to temporize so that people in hospital, in pain, people who are trying to re-establish their lives, will be starved for cash. These companies will make a lot of money on payments which they're not having to provide to accident victims, and those accident victims will be levered into having to settle for far less than they are owed. That's exactly what we've got here. The reduction in the interest rate that is meant to give insurance companies an incentive to settle and make payment only serves the interest of insurance companies, only serves to undermine policyholders, only serves to undermine justice in this province. Speaker, this part of the bill—and there are other problems—is an unconscionable change.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just briefly, I appreciate the comments, and I think I heard a bit of consensus. We need legislation that effectively will get a handle on fraud and deal with the fraudsters, deal with some of the bureaucracy and red tape that is suffocating this industry and, by extension, suffocating the policyholders, the brokers, the appraisers and everybody else involved in trying to provide a product at the least cost possible and within reason.

Again, I echo some of what I heard. Let's get this to committee as soon as possible. Let's come up with the best piece of legislation that we can for the benefit of all.

One thing I detected here was a bit of a sentiment that the policyholder, the consumer, has lost trust in the industry. That is unfortunate. That has to be fixed. I think we can play a role there. I mentioned the insurance company that I was connected with, one of the farm mutual companies. There was trust between our company and our policyholders. We worked very closely with our brokers. The people who purchased the product knew

their brokers. They knew their broker's family. Again, I'm talking kind of small town, Main Street. I think a lot of that can be brought back into this industry as well. It's up to us to get it to committee to come up with the best piece of legislation that we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate. The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. It's an honour to be able to stand in the House and represent the views of my constituents in Windsor—Tecumseh.

Before I begin, I would like to again express my condolences to the member from Whitby—Oshawa on the passing of her husband, former MPP Jim Flaherty; and condolences as well to the member from Durham, a close friend, and actually to the entire PC caucus on the loss of a friend and former colleague.

To Bill 171: Allow me, Speaker, to say right off the top that I'm not a lawyer. I've never sold insurance for a living. I've never been on the board of an insurance company, not-for-profit or otherwise.

This bill, Bill 171, has been given the title by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government of the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. I take exception to that. It does nothing of the sort. A better title may well have been the "Government's smoke and mirrors act" or "Dear insurance companies, here's an Easter gift for you from all of your friends in the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government act."

The intent of the bill is to implement changes to Ontario's automobile insurance system, a system that can, at times, be quite difficult to understand and navigate. It is not an easy system to understand. It's complicated and full of lots of rules and regulations.

Let's be serious here: This bill is nothing more than the Liberal government, without any consultation with the victims of automobile accidents and without any consideration for the victims of automobile accidents, handing yet another gift to the big insurance companies. You know what, Speaker? It's a gift from the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals that comes at the expense of all of us who drive and buy car insurance, the policyholders; and all of us who will ever be in an accident that wasn't our fault, the innocent accident victims.

This is really bad legislation. And who is this legislation really benefiting? Well, the majority of the recommendations in Justice Cunningham's final report on the dispute resolution system forms the basis for the legislative changes.

The most glaring error in this bill is that it denies accident victims access to the courts, which they have enjoyed for some time now. In the guise of cost savings to the insurance industry, this McGuinty-Wynne Liberal bill is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of all of us.

Currently, accident victims have the right to go to court or to arbitration to challenge when insurance companies

wrongfully deny benefits. In its place, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government is proposing to give us a tribunal—no access to the courts that we used to enjoy, but a tribunal—the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General. Thanks, but no thanks.

Speaker, I don't know if you've ever been injured in a car accident; if not, I'm sure you're either related to somebody who has or you have a friend or a neighbour who has been in an accident and has experienced pain and suffering as a result of that. It's a traumatic experience for all involved.

There's something called prejudgment interest—a legal term—on damages from the pain and suffering. This prejudgment interest is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. Speaker, I don't know about you, but I have often heard about delays in getting money from an insurance company. It seems to me that it's one of the most common complaints: delay, delay, delay.

Go to a Tim Hortons this afternoon. Start a conversation with a stranger about insurance companies and prompt payment. Okay, that's an oxymoron; I get that. Start a conversation with a stranger about how difficult it is to get an insurance company to pay out what has been determined as a fair settlement in a timely fashion.

Back to this smoke-and-mirrors bill we're discussing here this afternoon, this so-called Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act introduced by the Minister of Finance: These great pretenders in the McGuinty-Wynne government would have us believe that changing the rules on the interest rate—the prejudgment interest—would somehow magically fall under this dubious title. This is nothing more than another hidden gift to the insurance industry. The change in the interest rate has nothing—nothing—to do with fighting fraud.

In reality, this change—currently, insurance companies are obligated to pay 5% interest on whatever we're owed for our pain and suffering. The McGuinty-Wynne Liberal bill would change that to 1.3%. How does that reduce fraud? I don't know, Speaker. You tell me. I don't know.

What it does do is remove any incentive an insurance company might have to pay out a claim in a reasonable period of time. Innocent victims will suffer more pain, less money, because of the content of this proposed McGuinty-Wynne Liberal piece of legislation. Insurance companies can pocket the 2.7% of your money for every year they put off settling with you.

You say that's fair? I sure as hell don't. It's not fair to take advantage of innocent victims, and that is what this proposal would do under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing insurance rates. Smoke and mirrors—smoke similar to that coming out of all of those hastily deleted hard drives in the computers in the McGuinty-Wynne offices. Smoke and mirrors indeed.

What is so amazing to me is the fact that this government's members, the government members on the other side, know this, yet they continue to pretend that this

proposed bill is in the public's best interests. It is in the name of efficiency, expediency and cost savings to the insurance industry—again, I say, for the insurance industry. This government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens, rights we have all come to expect in this great nation we call Canada, and to replace the courts with a tribunal.

What happens if you're injured, you can't work, and the insurance company refuses to pay your income replacement? You can't sue. It's false to suggest that this will provide cost savings to the insurance industry and reduce insurance premiums.

1440

My colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Mr. Singh—who is a lawyer and a fine member of the bar, highly regarded by his peers and by those who know a thing or two about fashion, I might add—spoke about the need to re-evaluate the priorities of the bill. He said, “Are we putting Ontario drivers, the consumers—the people who are having difficult times making ends meet—as a priority? Or are we putting, simply, the costs incurred by insurance companies as the priority? I question the priorities of this government when it comes to that.” The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton was questioning the priorities of the McGuinty–Wynne government, and so do I.

That turns my mind to the issue of fraud. We all know that fraud is a burden on our insurance system. It increases rates for honest drivers—at the expense of dishonest ones. We know that auto insurance rates are directly linked to claims costs.

Having a car, for most families, is not a luxury but a necessity. Cars get people where they want to go, where they need to go. We know that very well in Windsor–Tecumseh and down in Essex, Speaker, because not only do we drive vehicles, but we build them, and the thousands of parts that go into each vehicle.

I don't think we can argue that we don't support the idea of getting rid of fraud. That's absolutely something that is the right thing to do. But this bill does something very different, and I've already mentioned it before. It further benefits the insurance companies, to the detriment and the cost to the drivers, with no guarantee that this further encroachment on their rights will actually reduce premiums.

By further cutting the costs of insurance companies, the hope is that somehow it will magically bring premiums down. We know that in 2010 insurance companies enjoyed one of the most historic cuts to their costs, yet most of us in this province are still waiting to see the firm, hard evidence of a substantial decrease in our insurance rates—smoke and mirrors indeed.

The McGuinty–Wynne Liberals promised they would take our lead and see that rates were lowered, and most of us are still waiting for that. Believe me, Speaker, time is running out on that promise, just as time is running out on the McGuinty–Wynne Liberal government.

Is this bill actually fighting fraud or fighting the accident victims—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Time has run out for you too—just for the speech. I apologize that I have to interrupt the member.

Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let's get one thing straight: The prejudgment interest issue has nothing to do with the fraud issue. This bill contains many, many different issues. With respect to fraud, a new unit has been set up between the Ministry of the Attorney General and the police departments to make sure that fraud with respect to auto insurance cases is dealt with more efficiently and expeditiously, and that will really save us dollars in the long run. The two issues are totally separate and apart.

I used to handle a fair amount of these cases before we had no-fault insurance and that sort of thing. In those days, if you went through the court system, insurance companies could hold you up for years before a case was actually heard and dealt with. And yes, many individuals who should have received the adequate amount of money they were entitled to much earlier basically had to wait a long period of time and, in some cases, settled for a lot less than they should have.

When no-fault insurance came in, a tribunal system was set up. The whole idea behind the tribunal system is to make sure that the benefits that people get under their insurance are paid a lot quicker. Let me tell you, under the tribunal system, it is paid a lot quicker than if you had to go to court to get the same amount of money that you're entitled to with respect to the benefits.

We employed a highly respected former Associate Chief Justice, Doug Cunningham, whom I've known since I went to law school, who used to handle a lot of these cases. He has come up with recommendations, whereby he is saying that the dispute resolution mechanism is best handled through the Licence Appeal Tribunal. I think we should take his advice and get on with it, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would basically like to, out of respect for the member from Windsor–Tecumseh—I do appreciate your kind remarks about our common friend, Jim Flaherty. I do remember the interview you had with Jim Flaherty and me in Windsor when you were working with the CBC. I remember that very well.

Where I differ with you today is that it looks like you're filibustering your own bill. Quite honestly, we want this to go to committee to make some improvements that are necessary to this bill, to protect the people of Ontario. That's what this is about. I'd ask you to respect that remark and reply to it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to be able to get up to speak, to comment on the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He always brings great light to debate here in the House. He talked a lot about smoke and mirrors. I

heard that several times through his comments. That's pretty much exactly what this is.

Again, I'll repeat it: Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act—I still haven't found the part about fighting fraud. I am sitting here. I keep looking. I'm listening across the House, waiting for the Liberals in the government to speak and to tell us what's in the bill about fighting fraud, but I'm not finding it. I hope that the next speaker who gets to stand on the other side of the House tells me all about that fighting-fraud piece and where to find it in the bill, because it's a really long bill here. There are 22 pages and I still haven't found anything on fighting fraud. I just find incentives for insurance companies to make more money and nothing at all about reduction for the payers of this province who are mandated to have auto insurance, which is a good thing, we know. But we would hope that people would be able to claim the benefits when they need this service the most.

Again, I'm looking forward to hearing from the government, letting me know which page I can find fighting fraud on.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Change our mind.

Miss Monique Taylor: Change my mind. Change my mind that this is a bad bill, because we're not finding the benefits that are going to help the people of this province to lower the rates for insurance. I'm looking for it. I'm looking to you for those answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I rise to speak on behalf of my colleague the member for Scarborough—Agincourt and my colleague the member for Scarborough—Guildwood as a Scarborough member to say that Bill 171 is really important to our constituents. Scarborough, like a few other pockets in Ontario, has really been hit hard by fraud. In essence, they've also been hit hard by insurance costs because of that.

On behalf of our constituents, we want to encourage the NDP to get on with this. They don't want to wait any longer. They want to get on with these reforms that Bill 171 will bring in terms of fraud reforms, in terms of lowering the costs of auto insurance. The fact is that the third party is needlessly extending debate on Bill 171, thereby reducing our ability to move forward with it. They keep putting speakers forward on this bill needlessly.

The bill has now been debated for nine hours. Over 42 members of this Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate—42 members. Listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill. I think we know that. We know that from the opposition. We know that from our members who have spoken. This signals that there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill, and the only goal of the NDP right now is to delay. They're doing that at the expense of my constituents in Scarborough and drivers across the province who want to see us move forward with this.

I'm calling on the third party to stop stalling. Help us pass this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his response.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Indeed, to the member from Kingston, the Chair of Cabinet, a gentleman I've always held in the highest regard, I thank you for your comments on the bill—and my good friend from Durham.

I have to agree with the member from Hamilton Mountain. You would have to be a detective to find out anything in here that's going to lead to a reduction in rates or anything to really deal with fraud. We're sometimes accused of trying to be detectives on this side of the House when the government House leader stands up and accuses us of interfering in the OPP investigation where some kid off of the street came in—some kid with an intimate relationship with someone in the Premier's office—and deleted emails; we're accused of being detectives interfering with an investigation. But here you need to be a detective to find out how you're going to lower insurance rates.

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To the Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities, thank you for your comments, and thank you for standing up for your constituents in Scarborough, but I think a lot of your constituents also run and work for insurance companies. It seems to me that you're just giving them another gift with this proposed legislation.

There is, to me, not one shred of evidence provided to any victim to explain how this proposal would reduce insurance premiums. It will cost us all more in the long run, and it will put more money into the fur-lined silk pockets of the insurance companies. Don't be fooled. Don't be fooled again by this half-baked scam. Don't be fooled by what's on the table. Yes, get it to committee, but let's correct it. It has a lot of faults, a lot of difficulties, and it needs great improvement. That's not to be in a filibustering mood, but it needs a lot of work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It is my pleasure to be able to rise to speak to the bill that's before us today. I, myself, have no quarrel with fighting fraud, and I certainly have no objection to reducing auto insurance rates. Indeed, one of the things I hear most about from my constituents on Hamilton Mountain are the stories about how much their auto insurance rates are going up.

I heard from one woman, a retired teacher. She is 70 years old, drives a 2000 Buick, and drives very little. She uses her car to go for groceries or to her recreational swimming activities.

She received her policy renewal notice. The amount was \$989 for the year and would be paid by monthly deductions from her bank account of \$82.42. A few months later, she received a revised statement from her insurance company. Her annual premium had gone up by \$402. That's an increase of over 40%.

What happened during those few months that would result in such a hefty increase to her auto insurance? She still had the aging Buick, so there was no change there. Surely she must have caused some sort of accident that resulted in serious damage to her own car or another. Perhaps there was even an injury involved. But no, that wasn't it either. Her driving record remained good, as it had always been.

Speaker, all this woman did was move from the lower city up on to the mountain. She moved not more than a few miles, and it resulted in an increase to her auto insurance of 40%.

Trying to understand the complicated paperwork she received, she wrote to the ombudsman of her insurance company for an explanation and for the office to confirm the \$402 increase. They did that, and simply realized that it was because she had had an address change.

This is just one of the stories that I've heard. I've heard many more from people who are waiting for their 15% reduction that this government promised.

We in the NDP have fought very hard to get this government to pay attention to the cost of auto insurance in Ontario. We thought we were getting somewhere when the government agreed to reduce auto insurance by 15%, but people are still waiting. In fact, not only have they not seen a reduction, but they have continued to see their auto insurance go up.

Yet today we have this bill that proposes to give another huge gift to insurance companies. Should we have any confidence that the cost savings might be passed on to the drivers? I would probably say not, if we're going to go by history.

When this Liberal government made some changes to auto insurance back in 2010, they put caps on how much the insurance companies had to pay out. When a person made an insurance claim, those changes meant that they were limited in how much they could claim. The result was that they saw a decrease between 2010 and 2011 of 50% in the statutory accident benefits. That cut to statutory benefits gave insurance companies a savings of over \$2 billion, but we have not seen those savings translate into lower insurance for drivers. No, we haven't. Instead, we have seen auto insurance costs continue to rise for drivers. I'm not convinced that this legislation will actually result in reduced auto insurance rates, as its name states.

I'm also concerned about the proposed system for dispute resolution under this new legislation. If Bill 171 is passed, victims will be denied access to the courts as they try to get justice. Every year, about 60,000 people are injured in a car accident in Ontario. Those people should be treated fairly, get the treatment and the rehabilitation they need, and also be compensated for any losses that they have as a result of their accident. Unfortunately, often that is not the case, and they are denied. Currently, those accident victims have the right to go to court or to arbitration to resolve this dispute. That right will be lost under this new legislation. Instead, they will

have to take their complaint to the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association had this to say about this move: "In the name of efficiency, expediency and cost savings to the insurance industry," the government "proposes to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens and to replace the courts with a tribunal." When an insurance company refuses to pay for lost income or necessary treatment, you won't be able to sue the insurance company. You can't even sue if you're entitled to punitive damages due to poor treatment from your insurance company. In many cases, the new dispute resolution may well be the best way to handle a particular situation but is certainly not appropriate for them all.

Unlike in the court system, if you successfully prove that the insurance company should have paid your benefits, the insurance company will only be forced to pay a fraction of your legal costs under the new system. Think about that for a minute. You have been treated unfairly. You decide to fight it and spend your own money, doing so at a time when your life is already turned upside down. You win your case, and you prove the insurance company was wrong, but you have no way to recover the significant costs you incurred to get this justice.

If someone else was at fault who caused your injury, you will need to operate in two separate systems. You will need a lawyer to bring two different cases: one against the person who injured you, in the court, and one against your insurance company, in a new arbitration system.

The system is already complex enough. It is already very difficult for insured people to get the benefits they deserve. These changes will make it even harder for victims, as many will not be able to afford it and will just give up the fight.

And what do these changes have to do with fighting fraud? Absolutely nothing. All they do is make it easier for insurance companies to wrongfully deny benefits and delay settlements.

Speaking about delayed settlements, Bill 171 also drastically cuts the interest rates to be paid to victims. It's called prejudgment interest. Under our rule, which has been in place for 30 years, it compensates an innocent victim when the insurance company of the person at fault delays paying damages for pain and suffering. The rule is in place to dissuade insurance companies from delaying the payment.

A constituent of mine, Michael Lamont, is a lawyer who has been in practice in Hamilton for 35 years. He wrote to me with his concerns about these proposed changes to auto insurance. Let me quote from his letter: "I am writing you to alert you to one of the proposed changes in the auto insurance regime that should be scrutinized and debated before becoming law.

"And, that is the proposed change to the prejudgment interest rate on pain and suffering damages from the current 5% per annum to the proposed rate for economic loss damages that is currently 1.3% per annum.

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"First of all it is only the most seriously injured plaintiffs who qualify for pain and suffering damages in a car accident. Secondly, for many claims, i.e. those claims assessed at less than \$100,000, a \$30,000 deductible applies. In other words, if the court assesses your pain and suffering damages at \$99,000, \$30,000 is deducted and your recovery is reduced to \$69,000.

"The current rate of 5% on these damages was an incentive to the insurer to deal with deserving claims expeditiously and, in some cases, make an advance payment in appropriate cases. With the proposed reduction to 1.3% on pain and suffering damages, this incentive will be removed, and to whose benefit? The answer is obvious. It will benefit insurers, at the expense of seriously injured innocent accident benefits."

Again, Speaker, what does this have to do with fighting fraud, and what is it going to do to reduce auto insurance premiums? We have seen no evidence that there will be any impact at all. Yes, we need to fight fraud on auto insurance systems, and, yes, we need to reduce auto insurance rates here in Ontario. The people in Ontario do not live in a bubble. They have friends and relatives across this country, and they make comparisons. They know we're paying more in Ontario, and they know it isn't fair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments.

The first thing I would say, Speaker, is that we are aware now that Bill 171 has been debated for almost 10 hours. There has been a significant amount of debate. Somewhere around 43 members have spoken on this particular piece of legislation already. If members feel that there are some amendments that need to be made to the bill, the best way for that to happen, I would say, would be to pass it at second reading and get it into committee.

What I would like to say to the member, however, is this: This is the third major package of reforms that we have brought forward when it comes to auto insurance rates in the province of Ontario since I've been elected in 2003. We brought forward a major package in 2003; we brought forward a major package in 2010. What we're doing now is a third major package that we have brought forward, trying to effect some positive change for people on their insurance premiums in the province of Ontario.

I would say to the member opposite from the third party, as a member of the NDP: I remember very clearly their one take on this was a private member's bill from the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, which was intended to do away with the risk rating that the insurance companies did primarily in the GTA. While the intention there was to reduce the rates for people in the GTA, the effect of that, coming from the NDP, would have been to increase rates in northern Ontario by some 37%. Every one of the NDP stood up, en masse, unanimously, to support a piece of private member's legislation that

would have increased rates in northern Ontario by some 30% to 37%.

As well, I would say, on your stab at this, that even Mothers Against Drunk Driving, a very significant stakeholder group when it comes to driving and premiums in the province of Ontario, was significantly opposed to that private member's bill, yet all members of the third party stood in unanimity, supporting that bill from that member.

This may not be perfect. Let's get it to committee and see if we can't bring forward any positive amendments on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I know our member from Elgin-Middlesex-London would be wanting this to go to committee. But in fairness to the member from Hamilton Mountain, I was a bit surprised when, in one of her comments, she was advocating for her friend, a lawyer. Really, I was a bit taken aback by that. She must have been responding to a fundraiser or something.

I would think that the best move right now is to get this to committee, make the needed amendments. I know our member from Elgin-Middlesex-London recommended that to us, and I agree with him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What a pleasure to stand here after listening to the pot calling the kettle black about filibustering.

Let me tell you about last week at the committee on government agencies. There was a motion on the floor to get some financial information from the Metrolinx people.

Interjection: It's been there a couple of weeks.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, that's right; it's been there for two weeks.

Ms. Soo Wong: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Scarborough-Agincourt on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I need to know if the member opposite from the third party is talking about Bill 171. I don't hear anything about Bill 171, and I wanted to make sure we stay on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for the intervention, but the member for Windsor-Tecumseh has the floor and, of course, according to the standing orders, he's supposed to be talking about the speech that the member for Hamilton Mountain made.

I recognize the member for Windsor-Tecumseh, and I'll give you a little extra time to ensure that you get to—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Yes, Bill 171, as I was saying just a couple of meetings ago—the word "filibuster" was used on the Bill 171 discussion this afternoon. A lot of arrows were flung across the floor, accusing the NDP of filibustering on a bill when the member for Mississauga East-Cooksville, the member for Scarborough-Guildwood, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt—20 minutes, 20 minutes, 20 minutes on an amendment to a motion to get some documents. So

when we talk about this bill and filibustering, let us not forget that it's a two-way street.

If you want to hang up legislative business in a committee—20 minutes on this, 20 minutes on clarification—and be accused of filibustering and take great umbrage at it, and then come in the House and somebody says there's a problem with a major bill and it should be straightened out, and you say, "No, that's filibustering"—I think we have a problem with that. And I believe the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry would agree 100% with what I've just suggested.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I actually am beginning to get a little bit confused here, because what I thought I heard the member from Hamilton Mountain saying is that there are some concerns about this bill. It seems to me that—as you well know, Speaker, this is second reading debate. We've spent over 10 hours, or almost 10 hours now. I think we're up to about 44 different people who have contributed to the comments on this bill. Usually, if you want to fix a bill, if you've got some good, positive suggestions on how to improve it, the way to do that is to get it out of here, pass it at second reading, send it to committee and make those positive suggestions about how to fix it.

But now I hear the member for Windsor-Tecumseh, and his whole slant on this is, "We can't pass this bill which is on an issue that we like to think of as our issue"—you know the NDP, big on insurance—"because we don't like the way you're behaving at some other committee," which makes no sense to me. I thought that the NDP wanted to move the insurance file forward, not doing some sort of weird tit-for-tat sort of performance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. The member for Hamilton Mountain has two minutes to reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for talking about a bill that's not perfect, because I agree it's not perfect. It's supposed to be about reforms and repair. Insurance fraud, reducing auto insurance rates—I'm not seeing that. So, no, it's not perfect.

The member from Durham talks about my friend being a lawyer. Actually, I've never met Mr. Lamont. I, like many of the other MPPs in this House, receive letters from people in our cities. So, thank you, but maybe one day I'll meet Mr. Lamont. I haven't yet, but he was kind enough to share with me information about the job that he does on a daily basis, and that's about protecting consumers in this province. It's about protecting people who have been in auto accidents and need to have some help getting through a system that's very cumbersome.

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh, thank you so much for putting your piece in and talking about the filibustering that we've been facing in government agencies, and how it's really ripe to hear back from the government how we're filibustering right now.

The Minister of Education, you talked about the hours of debate and moving forward. Well, you know, I would love to do that, but the entire time that I've been in this House today I've been waiting for the answers on where fighting fraud and reducing auto insurance are in this bill. I haven't heard that. I guess I'm going to have to continue to sit here and listen to other speakers until we get some kind of answers, and then maybe we can move it on to committee. But until that time, I think it's important, I think it's critical, that we're getting some answers and some feedback to our concerns.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure, Speaker, to have such a captive audience in the House this afternoon on Bill 171. I thank my colleagues in the NDP who have added their remarks and their thoughts and ideas on this bill.

We just heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who stated that the bill is not perfect. I certainly agree. I would submit that the bill is not even accurate in its title: Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014. It's similar to the misnomers of bills presented at the federal level. One that I can think of is the Fair Elections Act that disenfranchises tens of thousands of potential voters. It's similar to that title in the sense that it does absolutely the reverse or the opposite of what we believe the bill title intends it to promote.

That being said, I've listened intently to the discussions and to the ideas. One concept that I can't get away from, in terms of the mechanics of this bill, is that it is a trickle-down benefit whereby the government reduces the liability that insurance companies face, whether it be through the judicial process or through—obviously, the cuts to the statutory accident benefits resulted in a wind-fall for insurance companies in 2010. It was celebrated by insurance companies. We did not see the subsequent reduction in premiums. In fact, we know that in the province of Ontario we have among the highest rates of auto insurance premiums. Premiums have gone up at the same time as accident rates have gone down.

The argument was made that this industry is based on supply and demand. I would submit that demand is low on the accident side. We see far fewer accidents, and in fact we see far fewer complicated injuries resulting from those accidents. We, of course, see automobiles that are constructed in a safer way. We see that they have certainly some modern technologies built into the design of cars that make them a little bit more crash-proof. So your common, everyday fender-bender isn't a total write-off these days. We're making progress in that respect.

We see that, again, accident rates have gone down. Premiums have gone up. Costs for insurance companies have gone down, but yet their profits have gone up. So they are doing very well in the province of Ontario. They're doing extremely well, supported by a whole

host, a suite, of policies that have been brought forward by the Liberal government.

Today we see a bill that is being, again, pushed forward by the government, supported in the pushing forward of the bill by the official opposition. They're hoping to expedite this bill through to the committee process without a full debate on it.

I've heard again the argument that we are stalling the bill or filibustering the bill. I see it as an opportunity to shine a little bit more light on a democratic process, to involve members of our community. Debate is televised in this House. More people actually tune in to the debate in the House. I'm not sure, if this bill does go to committee, if that committee will be televised. It will make it a little bit harder for people to actually follow what's happening. So we need to take this opportunity in the House to express our ideas and our concepts.

New Democrats, I think, have been pretty solid in the sense that we see this as being detrimental to insurance claimants, that they will be put at a disadvantage when trying to access the benefits that they rightly deserve and the system that has been in place that safeguards their fundamental rights. Don't take it from me, Speaker. That's coming from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, who have said that the changes that are proposed will result in wiping out recourse that safeguards fundamental rights.

I can understand that if the bill is being industry-driven, that would be the premise on which they would want this to go by, but what I can't understand is the support that basic component receives from the Conservative Party. I always thought they would stand up and hold true to their beliefs in fundamental rights of the person and safeguarding those rights; in fact, we see today that they do not. They see this as something that will support insurance companies and then hopefully, again, trickle down as a benefit somewhere along the line for drivers and insurance payees in this province.

We know that they are changing the model from legal parameters—they're changing the recourse that you would have in the courts, to fight insurance companies to try to gain what you're justly owed in terms of your compensation, into a tribunal system. There's a redundancy there where we used to—if someone was looking to actually fulfill or receive the recourse that they are justly owed, they would simply head off to the courts with their chosen legal representatives and fight that fight. Now we know that they will have to do it on both fronts: through the tribunal system, and then also through the tort system.

Secondly, we hear that they are also reducing the prejudgment interest payment. It will be cut from 5% per claim, per annum, to 1.3%. What that results in will be—as expressed quite clearly by my friend the member from Toronto—Danforth—that insurance companies will now be able to hold off on making those payments and drag the process out, to the effect of actually gaining monetarily on not paying out that prejudgment interest.

So a 5% cut to 1.3%—the example given by my colleague was, what if they're receiving a four-point

advantage on their investments? They're actually making money dragging people through the court system. We see that as wholly unfair, and certainly something that drivers, given the opportunity to understand that these are the changes being proposed by the government, will not stand for.

Perhaps that's why the government wants us to end debate so quickly, because the more we talk about it, the more we put it out there and inform drivers in the province of Ontario that these changes—as we believe them—will be more detrimental, even more so than the changes that they already made to the statutory benefits. That, again, resulted in a windfall to the tune of \$2 billion a year for insurance companies. I don't think that they're buying it. We certainly don't think that we're buying it.

I've certainly heard from the government side their willingness—from some of the members. Certainly we know that the Minister of the Environment is a long-standing proponent of public auto insurance, and I would love him to make that stand in his own caucus and call for that. We take examples from other jurisdictions, like Manitoba, that have public auto insurance regimes that use it as a strategic asset, use it as a benefit for drivers and have one of the lowest auto insurance premiums in the country. I don't think that the government has the fortitude to do that at this time, but at some point maybe the Honourable Minister of the Environment may decide to take a stand within his own caucus and force the issue within the Liberal government, to actually make some positive changes for drivers in the province of Ontario, who have been really, really disenfranchised and put at a disadvantage with skyrocketing car insurance rates.

The member from Windsor—Tecumseh, my colleague, knows full well we are the automotive capital of Canada. That doesn't only mean that we build the cars, but, by golly, we drive a lot of cars in our ridings as well, and folks in my region know that auto insurance rates are out of control. They're not seeing the benefits that they are justly owed, and they're seeing their premiums go through the roof, sometimes without any history of accidents in their driving record.

That's unconscionable, and we need to actually make progress and make some substantial changes for drivers. Let's see the equation on the drivers' side. Let's see directly how they will benefit through lower premiums through this bill.

As my colleague from Hamilton Mountain has stated, we see no direct correlation to fighting fraud in this bill. The language does not clearly articulate it, nor do we see the direct benefit for claimants, for those who pay insurance. You haven't made that connection; you haven't made that argument. That's why we need to continue debate. Until you do, you will continue to hear the voice of New Democrats who stand for drivers in the province of Ontario. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been a pleasure.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: So let me get this right. The NDP a year or so ago wanted insurance rates to be reduced by 15%, and we're working towards that. This bill is a direct response to that request. There are many positive aspects of this bill that will actually make it happen. So what are they saying? Do you really think we would bring in a bill that would be directly contrary to the intent that you're now suggesting? That is ludicrous. You know it's ludicrous. We all know it's absolutely ludicrous.

Speaker, they say that auto insurance fraud in this province amounts to somewhere between \$770 million and \$1.6 billion. We realize it's an issue. That comes from a task force. We realize it's a major issue. That's why we've set up, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, an anti-fraud unit that will work together, between police and crown attorneys, to make sure that this fraud situation, which is costing you and I in our premiums that we pay for auto insurance on a day-to-day basis, will be curtailed. That's one issue that's been dealt with.

The other thing we did is, we wanted to speed up the benefits tribunal process, so we got one of the most prominent individuals who used to practise in his law practice an awful lot of automobile insurance cases—and then of course later on he became the Associate Chief Justice for the province of Ontario—Douglas Cunningham. We asked him to do a report. He came out with a report that basically said that we can get the benefits tribunal system speeded up and be more efficient if we transferred it to the License Appeal Tribunal. That's what we've done.

These are all positive ways in which insurance rates can be lowered and, also, benefits be paid earlier than is currently the case. That's what this bill is really all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Essex again made a compelling argument, for sure. In my riding I hear the same thing—complaints. The last 10 years under this government I've heard complaints about energy, I've heard complaints about electricity, I've heard complaints about auto insurance. But really, honestly, the best way to get some sound information on this is to get it to the committee as soon as possible. The reason I say that is that we're in support of respecting the views of the people of Ontario, but we've got to hear it from the stakeholders themselves. I'm sure that if you give it up to them, they'll send it to committee and we'll hear more about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed again a pleasure to stand in this House on a warm afternoon with no air conditioning in the Legislature.

I want to compliment the member from Essex for his insight into this bill, especially when he drew attention to the fact that the title of the bill has got very little to do with the content when you talk about fighting fraud and

reducing auto insurance rates, because it's just not in there.

We hear a lot from the Premier of the province about her conversations with people around the province. I guess in order to have a conversation you have to listen. And if you're listening, you can understand why people on this side of the House have raised some concerns with the bill. But the members opposite, the members of the government, don't seem to be listening, because they haven't stood up and said, "You know what? That's a fair point. That's a good point. I'm glad you raised it. Maybe we can improve this bill." All we hear back is, "Oh, we don't want to hear from you guys. You guys have talked enough already. Get it to committee." Come on: Why can't you agree when somebody raises an issue and raises a legitimate concern to a weak piece of legislation that is proposed that is not going to do what you say it's going to do? Why can't you say, as the member from Trinity-Spadina would say, "God bless. Thank you for the idea. We'll take it. We'll run with it"? Instead, all we get is, "Sit down, shut up. We've heard enough from you. That's not what we're here for."

You go out in the community and ask people if they're paying too much for automobile insurance. You ask them if the Liberals are doing anything about it. I'll tell you right now they'll say, "No, no, no."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to add some brief comments to this lively discussion this afternoon. I think that's the point we're trying to make on this side. We've had 10 hours of debate on this; more than 44 members of the Legislature have spoken on this bill. Let's get this to committee.

We're listening on this side of the House. This is the opportunity in committee to be able to make some of these changes that we all want to see. We all agree that there are challenges with respect to automobile insurance and we want to make those very important changes. And to have that discussion we need to have this in committee. We need the members in the third party to stop stalling and we need to get this to committee. That's really the key here.

There was a member of the third party—the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton—who introduced a private member's bill on automobile insurance that I know would have seen automobile rates in northern Ontario, my area, go up by about 25%, if that had actually happened. That's not the kind of progressive leadership we want to see on automobile insurance.

Bill 171 is worthy of debate in committee. We need to get that bill to committee. We really want to call on the members of the third party to stop stalling debate in the committee on this issue. Let's move this along.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's the end for questions and comments. I return to the member for Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the minister without portfolio—the Chair of Cabinet—the member

from Durham, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh and the Minister of Natural Resources. That was lively. That was really great. This is what it's all about, us actually having some full debate in this House. I don't know if it will get like that at committee, but I certainly enjoy it here. I think it's an expression of our ideas and our passion—and of the comments that are coming from our ridings.

I have yet to hear any comments from the government side that relate to drivers in particular. Give me some anecdotal evidence about how a driver in your region or your riding believes that Bill 171—fighting fraud and reduction—is going to make their auto insurance go down. Tell me, because we haven't heard it. Present that evidence. You've got lots of time on the clock to be able to do that.

The Chair of Cabinet, the minister without portfolio, says that this bill is not ludicrous at all. If it is not ludicrous, Minister, then why is it that it has the full, abiding support from the Progressive Conservatives? That is ludicrous in and of itself. They absolutely support this bill. That gives us pause. That gives us reason for caution that this bill is being propped up by the Conservatives. There's something wrong, because what we believe is, that is being spearheaded and supported primarily by the insurance lobby, not by drivers in our ridings. Those aren't the people who have a voice on this bill. It is the insurance lobby that is driving—no pun intended—this insurance bill into committee, or wanting it to go into committee. We would like to have debate to present our ideas on this bill to make sure that all the nuances are worked out, that we've heard the technicalities of the bill—not simply to have lobbyists have their say.

Speaker, I was pleased to join the debate. I look forward to hearing from all members on all sides of the House. This is what we have this place for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's truly an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of my NDP caucus and, more importantly, on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming—Cochrane. I take this responsibility very seriously, and that's why I'm going to take these few minutes and talk about this bill and the impact it has on my residents—or could potentially have on my residents—both the good parts and the bad parts of the bill.

Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014—that's the working title and that's the title that's supposed to excite people. The real title is An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens—not quite as exciting. I was watching in my office as this debate was going on, and the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, now Minister of Municipal Affairs, made some very good points. I will grant him that. He said that this is the third time, the third stab, that the government in the last 10 years has tried to take a shot at fixing automobile insurance, and the only problem is—they've made some changes, but I think in a

lot of parts of the province people don't feel the changes in their rates.

1530

Yes, I come from northern Ontario, where automobile insurance rates aren't our number one issue. We've got a lot of bigger issues: hydro prices; winter road maintenance. But automobile rates are still important because we don't have, in our part of the province, the luxury of a GO train—we don't have enough people. We don't have the luxury of passenger rail—that was cut. We've got the night bus. We have to use automobiles, so this is an issue for us.

We all have to have the opportunity to be able to speak in this House, and we should all try to bring a different issue forward, because not all of these issues can be addressed by committee, but the people here should know what's going on around the province. The people at home should be able to understand what's going on around the province.

One part that we haven't talked about is licensing of insurance agents and adjusters. We agree with this part. We haven't talked about it a lot, but I'd like to put some things on the record. If you look at the title—the title that should be printed in the paper—Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates, and then you go to this one and it says “Licensing of insurance agents and adjusters,” it makes sense. Most people would think that there was already a very robust licensing system in place, and this implies that that is not the case.

I have an example in my riding. I'm not going to name companies, but I will name the company that fixed it. We had an example in my riding of a big insurance claim that was badly handled by the adjuster, and extremely badly handled by the agent. It was on a farm. It almost caused the farming operation to go into bankruptcy.

At that time, I was president of the federation of agriculture, and I called, at that time, my own insurance agent—he's no longer my insurance agent because they don't cover my area anymore: Knox Insurance in North Bay. They stepped in and did what an agent should do. They looked through every nook and cranny, and they found that, lo and behold, there was a government program, a federal program, that would cover these people. That was a good agent.

Now I'm covered by another company, Tench-MacDiarmid, and they're good agents as well because they look—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Do they have your name up there on a list?

Mr. John Vanthof: No—they look for every little thing that they can fix.

Because we'd gone through that experience on that farm—not all agents are like that and not all adjusters are like that either. So anything we can do to strengthen that, whether it's automobile, whether it's fire, anything like that, is a good step. I think it's important to get that on the record in the Legislature. This part of the bill likely won't be covered in committee because we all agree on this part, but it's something that should be put on the

record. When I dealt with this issue when I was with the federation, I was under the assumption that insurance in this province was so well regulated that the problems we encountered on that case just couldn't happen. Obviously, they did, and it made a big difference who the insurance agent was, who the adjuster was.

So this is a good time to tell the people in my riding and anyone who is watching and listening that you have to be very careful with insurance. Know the people you're buying insurance from. Make sure that you have a good relationship with them. Make sure that you understand your policy and make sure you understand it before something happens.

I'll tell you a personal story; I don't tell personal stories very often. It wasn't auto, but I had a personal accident on my farm. It was a very serious accident, and I didn't have insurance. I didn't have WSIB either. I was just starting on my farm and I couldn't work for quite a few months. But I had a big mortgage, a very big mortgage, so after two months—and I'd like to thank all my friends and neighbours who came and worked my farm, and my wife, who actually did yeoman's effort, to keep us above water.

Two months later, the bank called and they said, "We heard you had a big accident." I said, "Yes." "Could you explain to us what happened?" "I got wrapped around a piece of farm equipment and I can't work for a while, but at the end of the day, hopefully all that's wrong is that I lost my thumb. After everything is said and done, I lost my thumb."

The lady at the bank said, "Really?" First, she told me I had disability insurance through my mortgage.

Cool. Bonus.

Then after I told the story and I said, "Well, at the end of the day, I'll just be missing my thumb," she says, "Oh, well"—almost her exact words—"that's too bad." I said, "What do you mean, that's too bad?" She said, "Well, if you had lost a finger and a thumb, you would have qualified. But just a thumb—you don't qualify."

Once again, that's an example of how careful you have to be. I didn't know I had any kind of insurance, but even when you have it—and now we do have disability insurance, and when I had employees we had disability insurance—you have to be very careful.

This is evidence, this bill—and that's why I think it's important that anyone who wants to take the opportunity to speak on a bill like this should be able to, because it's very important that everyone understands their insurance policy and understands what happened. We're talking about this in the abstract, but it's a whole different story when you are fighting a claim or when you're disabled in a car accident and then, all of a sudden, because of this bill, you realize you have to start two legal avenues, which costs twice as much money. For us speaking here, we're facing a whole different circumstance than someone who is actually fighting an insurance claim.

As far as this bill for reducing automobile insurance rates, I don't think there's a lot in this. There are things in this bill that would make the sector a bit stronger. I think

we could support those things. But as far as this bill reducing overall auto insurance rates—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Or fraud.

Mr. John Vanthof: —or fraud—I have a bit of a problem.

One issue where I have also have a bit of a problem is the provision in this bill that lowers—sometimes it takes a long time to get through the process, so an insurance company doesn't pay out as quickly as you would like. Formerly, they would have to pay 5% interest, which you would get upon payout—the way I understand this bill—and that has been lowered to, I believe, a point and a half or something.

I don't think you have to be an economist to know that at a point and a half, the insurance company is going to be able to make money on investing that money, so that would be a deterrent to paying out more quickly. Once again, I don't think that's really helping the victim, and there are victims sometimes. We're going to have to look at that a bit more closely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to join the debate, and I want to thank the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for sharing his personal story on auto insurance as well. I know that this is an issue that many of us are passionate about on all sides of the House. Personally, in my family, my husband had a personal car accident in 1989. This was before the tribunal that is in place now was even implemented, and I can tell you that we had to wait a long time. We had to wait a long time until that matter was settled. My kids were young, and he was really sick during that time. My husband was really sick. So it really was a toll. It was a great toll on the family, and the responsibility.

1540

So I'm glad that at least there is now this tribunal that speeds things up. In this bill, however you say it's not comprehensive of everything. It may not be. But it's trying to fight fraud, to speed the process up, and this is what's important for anyone who is affected by an accident and has to deal with an insurance company.

You know, at this point, we have debated for over 10 hours. Over 45 members have spoken about this bill, and if changes are needed, we should do that in committee. We should move on and try to get as much help as possible as soon as possible to the people of Ontario that we all are here passionately to represent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. He always brings such a practical voice and the real story, and he told it again today. He told the real story about when he lost his thumb. He still does very well here with, as he said, a slight disability—but it never impeded him. But really the point is, that he should recognize, if we want to fix insurance, we should get it to committee. The member

from Elgin–Middlesex–London has told us that we need to get this to committee, and I agree with him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I actually want to thank personally the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for sharing that personal story. I think that it relays how important it is to get a piece of legislation like this right the first time. Unfortunately, as he has pointed out—and this is probably one of the most contentious pieces of this legislation—the title of the bill is the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. It doesn't have a clear path to fight fraud. I think that actually the member previously gave a good example of that.

Currently, insurance companies are required to pay 5% interest on whatever you're owed for pain and suffering. As the member from York South–Weston has pointed out, there is pain and suffering in that waiting process. Families do suffer, and we actually heard it at finance committee last year as well.

So, if you have a serious injury and you are owed \$50,000 for pain and suffering and the insurance company delays paying for three years, they have to pay \$7,500 in interest, and that makes up for the waiting period of time. If the provisions are passed as they stand right now and the prejudgment interest rate is reduced to 1.3% instead of 5%, the insurance companies stand to earn 2.7% profit on your money for every year they put off settling with you. So there is no incentive; there's no incentive whatsoever for the insurance companies to do the right thing. And certainly, there's no incentive within the confines and the framework of this legislation to truly address fraud in the province of Ontario.

On this side of the House, we acknowledge that fraud is an issue, but there's definitely a trust issue that needs to be rebuilt between the auto insurance industry and the consumers. This piece of legislation does nothing, really, to address that in a significant way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I always enjoy listening to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He always makes so much sense. Maybe it's our common Dutch heritage that allows that to happen—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's because he's a New Democrat. New Democrats make sense.

Hon. John Gerretsen: —and some of it has even rubbed off on his uncle Ernie, although not quite as commonsensical as he and I are in our different ways.

The one thing I would suggest to you, member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, is: Tell your colleagues in your party to get rid of their speaking notes. I know they are well intended, but most of their notes are wrong. They are wrong. Somebody has put them together on the bill, and it's got nothing to do—they keep talking about prejudgment interest and trying to tie it into fraud. There is no connection. The fraud part is one thing. We've set up a unit, which I've mentioned before, taking members from the Attorney General's department, crown attor-

neys, with the police; that's one issue. The prejudgment interest issue is a totally different issue; it's got nothing to do with fraud. So get rid of your notes. Speak to the bills. Read the bills and then come in here and talk about it.

That's a problem on all sides of the House—even on our side, too. Everybody gets these notes, prepared by our backroom people. You come in here and read them rather than reading the bill and seeing what the bill is all about.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, no, no. No, no, no. I'm not reading from a note. This has got something to do with—that was in the clips this morning.

In any event, Speaker, this bill tries to address the high insurance rates that are being paid in this province of Ontario. It's working. We've had prominent people deal with it. They have come up with some suggestions as to how the tribunal system can be improved upon. Let's send it to committee. Enough is enough. We've talked enough about it. Agreed? Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for his reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank the members who commented on my 10 minutes: the member from York South–Weston, who related her own experience; the member from Durham—I always like listening to the member from Durham; the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Be careful what you wish for.

Mr. John Vanthof: Smart lady—and the member from Kingston, someone who I always enjoy listening to as well, the minister without portfolio. Maybe if he had a portfolio, he'd have some different views.

But it's very important. This issue, insurance, is the number one issue to a lot of people in the province. That's why it's really good that we discuss it. If we've come close to the end of this discussion, so be it, but it's truly part of this democratic process that anyone who wants to speak—you work hard to get elected. You get elected because people believe you're going to speak up for them. As long as I'm elected and as long as I'm the MPP here, if I believe that I should speak on behalf of my residents, I will take that opportunity, as I'm sure the member from Kingston has done over his long career as well.

And yes, we do share some Dutch heritage. I have some family heritage here. He was sitting here next to me, but he left before the camera turned on. I warned him, if he was here, I was going to nail him, but he left. I'm very proud of my uncle, but he didn't want to be in the camera shot with me.

But anyway, I would like to conclude my remarks and thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To which committee would the government want to send the bill?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. I think the wording is, "Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?" That's when I get up and I say, "I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government, Speaker."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): So ordered.

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 2, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act/ Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Milloy has moved second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): So ordered.

Orders of the day? I recognize the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move that we adjourn the House at this point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Gerretsen has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1551.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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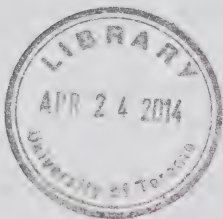
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Tuesday 15 April 2014

Mardi 15 avril 2014



Speaker
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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to require certain food service premises to display nutritional information / Projet de loi 162, Loi assujettissant certains lieux de restauration à l'obligation d'afficher des renseignements nutritionnels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy.

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to put just a few thoughts on the record about this bill. At the outset, I'd like to point out that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Health, as well as her parliamentary assistant, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I think all of us recognize, and we've heard many times over, that unfortunately for far too long—not just in Ontario, but I think throughout the western world—instead of having a health care system, we have an illness system, one that is focused far too much on people who have obviously acquired a disease or in some way have fallen ill. We're not putting enough emphasis on keeping people healthy in the first place and making sure that people are engaging in the type of activity that allows them to create the healthy choices they need to maintain their health and to have, obviously, a better lifestyle, but also in a sense to remove some of the pressure from the health care system.

That really is the philosophy behind Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act. We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults, and a healthy start is better for our kids and is better for our health care system.

We've heard loud and clear from parents that they want support to help keep their kids healthy. In order for our parents and children to make healthy choices, they need to be informed about the food they are eating. That's why what this legislation would do is make it easier for families to make informed and healthy food choices and give them the right information in the right place at the right time.

Having set a little bit of the context to it, I'd now like to, as they say in the United States, yield the floor to my colleague the Minister of Health. As I say, we're also sharing our time with her parliamentary assistant to provide more details on this very important and forward-looking piece of legislation about truly creating a health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the government House leader. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant. I am very pleased to rise today to speak further to Bill 162, our government's proposed Making Healthier Choices Act that I introduced on February 24.

It's important for Ontario families to know that we have a plan to make our kids the healthiest they can be and that we are implementing strategies to make that happen. That's why we introduced this legislation which will, if passed, require restaurant chains, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service establishments with 20 or more locations to post calories for food and beverage items, including alcohol, on their menus.

The sad reality is that the incidence of overweight and obesity are on the rise in this province: 28% of Ontario children and youth are currently overweight or obese, and that figure rises to 40% for aboriginal children. The effects of childhood obesity can have negative consequences well into adulthood, and I speak from personal experience on that. We know that 75% of obese children grow up to become obese adults, and obesity in adulthood brings with it an increased risk of a range of chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and osteoarthritis. These illnesses take a serious toll on individuals and their families, and they also place a financial burden on our health care system. Here in Ontario, obesity results in an estimated \$1.6 billion in direct health care expenditures alone every year for hospital care, drugs and physician services. You can add to that an additional \$2.9 billion in indirect costs, such as lost earnings due to illness and premature death. It's clear to me that doing nothing now will only cost the system more later. This proposed legislation will help Ontario families make more informed and healthy food choices, which is a key to improving the overall health of our kids.

People lead busy lives today. They don't cook and eat at home as much as previous generations did. Today, 60% of Canadians eat out once or more a week and more than 60% of young people eat in a fast food restaurant once or more a week. When eating away from home, por-

tion sizes are bigger and people tend to consume more calories and fat and fewer fruits and vegetables. According to a 2011 Ipsos Reid survey, 95% of Ontario residents support requiring fast-food restaurants to post nutrition information on their menus. The need to act is clear, and the public is behind us. Ontarians support this legislation.

In addition to having public support, I was convinced from the outset that improving the health of our kids would not be possible without strong industry partnerships. So we consulted widely with key sectors including food and beverage manufacturing, agriculture, restaurant, food service, food retail, health care and most of all parents, to get their input on how to move forward. These consultations were completed in November 2013. I do want to thank all of these partners for the very thoughtful advice they provided, much of which is reflected in the legislation.

We also have strong support for legislating the posting of calories on menus from health experts in the US and Canada, including the Ontario Medical Association and Cancer Care Ontario. Here's what Dr. Scott Wooder, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, had to say: "Ontario's doctors wholeheartedly support the government's plan to introduce menu labelling in large chain restaurants ... Obesity is strongly associated with an increase in chronic disease."

Our proposed legislation requires the posting of calorie information for standard food and beverage items. This includes alcohol because, for adults, the calories found in alcohol should be counted as part of their daily caloric intake, and we want everyone to be able to make healthier choices.

The proposed legislation requires food service premises to display a contextual statement that explains the recommended daily intake of calories. This information will help people understand how calories fit into the context of a healthy diet. As well, the proposed legislation would authorize public health inspectors to inspect food service premises and enforce these requirements.

If the legislation passes, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to legislate posting calories on menus.

I want families to have easily accessible and transparent nutrition information when they buy prepared foods, because I know that when they have this information they're more likely to make the wiser, healthier choice. As for industry, I want to say thank you to businesses like McDonald's, who have welcomed this change. Businesses are used to adapting to the desires of their customers, and I'm confident that menus will change to reflect their customers' wishes when more nutritional information is available. We also intend to provide the food industry with adequate time and the necessary tools to support implementation of the new regulations.

0910

This proposed legislation is a key component of Ontario's Healthy Kids Strategy, which responds to the Healthy Kids Panel's recommendations for reducing childhood obesity. We developed this cross-government

strategy to promote children's health with a focus on, first, a healthy start, supporting healthy preconception, a healthy pregnancy and early years to build a foundation for a healthy childhood and beyond; we built it on healthy food, an essential component to achieve healthy weights and healthy childhood development; and, finally, healthy and active communities, because building healthy environments for children is the responsibility of the whole community.

This proposed legislation is the latest in a series of actions we've already taken to implement the recommendations of the Healthy Kids Panel's report. We know that posting calories on menus on its own wouldn't be enough. That's why last September we announced new investments of \$2.5 million to enhance breastfeeding supports to make sure that every new mum who wants and needs help with breastfeeding can get it.

In October of last year, we announced an investment of \$3 million to expand Ontario's Student Nutrition Program, creating more than 200 new breakfast and morning meal programs for about 33,000 more kids in higher-needs communities. More recently, as part of our five-year plan to enhance and expand this program, we committed an additional investment of \$32 million over the next three years. That will give 56,000 more children and youth the nutritional boost they need to be healthy and succeed at school.

Last December, our government and the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games organizing committee launched the Pan Am/Parapan Am Kids Program to build excitement for the games and inspire young people to lead healthy and active lives. Pan Am/Parapan Am Kids will provide opportunities for kids to participate in a variety of games-related sports and para-sports activities, increase cultural understanding of Pan American countries and encourage community celebrations leading up to the 2015 games. Activities will begin at selected after-school programs during the holidays and ramp up in schools in the spring of 2014, building excitement all the way to the summer of 2015.

In January, the Premier and I announced the Healthy Kids Community Challenge that involves communities across Ontario partnering with organizations from all sectors of the community to work together to promote healthy eating, activity and sleeping among our kids. This is a fantastic opportunity for communities to build innovative, unique and community-driven programs together to make Ontario's children the healthiest they can be. The challenge will get families, schools, local businesses, and health, recreation and other organizations working together to create a strong network of supports that will improve the health of our young people because we want to create an environment that motivates kids to be active and healthy. We want our children to get the best start in life and put them on a path to lifelong health so they can reach higher and achieve their aspirations.

At least 30 communities will be chosen to participate in the challenge. Selected communities will be eligible for up to \$1.5 million over four years in funding to de-

velop community-based programs that encourage and promote physical activity, improve childhood nutrition and appropriate sleep. My ministry received dozens of terrific proposals from communities across Ontario. I hope to say more about the successful communities very soon.

Just last month, my colleague David Zimmer, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, announced that we're expanding three highly successful programs that foster healthy eating and physical activity to make it easier for aboriginal children and youth to adopt healthy lifestyles. We're doubling funding for the healthy eating and active living strategy delivered by the province's aboriginal health access centres. We're doubling funding for the Urban Aboriginal Healthy Living Program delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and doubling funding for the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program to expand to more communities with a high aboriginal population.

With this added funding, we're implementing another recommendation of the Healthy Kids Panel, which recognized the unique challenges faced by young people living in northern and aboriginal communities.

I know that all members in this House want to give our kids and grandkids the best possible start in life so they can grow up to become healthy, productive adults who will continue to build this great province.

Passing this proposed legislation would give us all the opportunity to carry on with the important task of keeping our kids healthy. Together, we can help parents across the province make the right choices to keep themselves and their families healthy.

I'm confident that this legislation is on the right track and hope that members of all three parties will support its passage at second reading so it can be examined more closely at committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to expand on the remarks made by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care regarding our government's proposed Making Healthier Choices Act.

Since 2007, the federal government has required food labelling for prepackaged foods only. Current federal legislation does not require posting calories on prepared foods served at restaurants and other food service premises. Our proposed act would fill that legislative gap.

To support Ontarians in making healthier choices, the proposed act would, first of all, require food service premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario to post calories on menus and menu boards. The legislation would only apply to food service premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario that are selling or serving standard food and beverage items, including alcohol. It would not apply to small operators with a handful of locations that may be financially challenged in meeting the requirements of the legislation. The proposed legislation would require only calories to be posted, which is the single best proxy for meeting our commitment to reduce overweight and obesity in children.

Secondly, it would require food service premises to post a contextual statement regarding daily calorie requirements. This statement could include the fact that, for example, the average adult requires 2,000 calories a day; children, of course, need less. We know that calorie information in isolation does not provide the public with sufficient information to make healthy choices. That's why displaying a contextual statement explaining the daily intake requirements for the nutrient in question will increase people's understanding and use of the information.

Thirdly, the proposed legislation would provide regulation-making authority to: exempt or require additional operators and settings to adhere to the legislation; create exemptions to the calorie-posting requirement for food items; and require the posting of additional nutrients at a later time. Exemptions would be defined in regulation, in consultation with industry, and may include daily or seasonal specials or items on the menu for a limited time, for example.

Another provision would prohibit municipalities from creating bylaws to require additional nutrition information to be posted on menus and menu boards. Several boards of health across Ontario have approved resolutions to implement the posting of calories on menus in their regions. I'm sure this has been done with the best of intentions, but we want to demonstrate provincial leadership and avoid a patchwork of different municipal requirements, which would be onerous for businesses to meet.

A further provision would provide for an offence for failure of food service premise owners and operators to adhere to the legislation. This means that there would be fines for individuals and corporations who fail to meet the requirements of the legislation. Of course, we will authorize inspectors to inspect and enforce these requirements.

The proposed bill will permit the minister to appoint inspectors to support compliance with the bill. The intent is for local public health units to be responsible for inspection and enforcement activities that could be done during routine inspections of food service premises.

As the minister said earlier, the government consulted widely with key stakeholders, including parents, to develop this legislation. The ministry also consulted with the public through an online survey, which confirmed public support for moving forward with this legislation.

Speaker, we are confident that with this legislation we will raise public awareness about the calorie content of foods eaten outside the home; make it easier for people to make healthier choices when eating out; and encourage the industry to reformulate high-calorie menu items.

I think we can all get behind what this proposed legislation intends to achieve, and I ask all members to support its passage through second reading so that we can take a closer look at it in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad to provide a few moments of comments on this bill.

I do want to express a concern. On March 4, 2014, the National Initiative for Eating Disorders, as a delegation, met with me in my office. I was very concerned; they have some concerns about this bill. Obviously, people with eating disorders, if they're going into a restaurant and see the calorie count in front of them—that's a concern.

I met with a woman named Wendy Preskow, who is the founder of the National Initiative for Eating Disorders. It's a huge organization. There are about 600,000 Canadian men and women, who are impacted, with eating disorders. They have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness: an astounding 20%.

So I listened very intently to the group that was there—how they feel that there needs to be some better awareness. I know this bill was one bill they had expressed concern about because of the way that menus would be labelled. This is a big issue for them to try to deal with. I just hope the government realizes that there are some groups that feel there should be some recognition that eating disorders are a huge issue and that we need to have the Ministry of Health better engaged with some of these groups.

I took very seriously the comments that Wendy made to me that day about some of the struggles she's had as a parent. The group that met with me really was concerned about the implementation of this bill and how it would affect people with eating disorders, and I promised them that I would bring their concerns and put them on the record today. I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on some of the statements that have been made with regard to Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act. Certainly, and first and foremost, I would just like to say that the member from Nickel Belt, of course, has introduced legislation that is very similar to this four times prior, so I think it's good that it's here on the floor today.

I agree with the member from Kitchener Centre that, currently, the focus is on dealing with illness in the province of Ontario. I think that there is a genuine call from the citizens of this province to have a more holistic, interventionist and preventionist perspective on health care. I think that would serve all of us well, including the taxpayer.

I would agree with the member from Oak Ridges—Markham that there are certain legislative gaps that the federal government has left on this portfolio which need addressing. I think that this is a timely piece of legislation.

I do think, though, that when we look at the broad spectrum of health care in the province of Ontario, we need to approach it from various places. Even from a planning perspective—I don't know if the Minister of Health noticed last week that the jurisdiction of Peel has the highest rates of diabetes, and they've connected that to planning, to the way the regional government has planned, because there's sprawl and there's a lack of exercise.

Certainly I hope that, within the confines of this House and outside, we look holistically at the way we plan our communities, at the way we address education and nutrition conversations through the health curriculum, for instance; that, perhaps, maybe the government may listen to some of our genuine calls to reform the Ontario Municipal Board so that municipalities are not overruled by that chapter; and that we plan for healthier communities where people are active. This is certainly a key piece: watching calories and connecting that conversation to smart decisions around healthy eating.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the opening speeches on Bill 162, and I'd like to thank the member from Leeds—Grenville for his comments.

This bill is about a healthy relationship with food, and those concerns are rightly expressed. We have concerns with obesity. I think one of the ways we've tried to address this as a government and as a legislative body is through the Healthy Kids Panel and the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. The reality is we have to make sure that our young people have the right relationship with food and understand what they're putting in their bodies, and understand what is healthy. This bill is one measure to do that.

Other measures, again, the Healthy Kids Panel: Understanding what the healthy choices are when you're young is very important. It's very easy to slide into a dietary situation where you're just eating junk. I'm a prime example of that. It's easy to slide into that. I think that if we inform the public, if we give our community the opportunity to understand what they're buying, what's in the food that they get—that's the kind of information that they need to promote health. I encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

Again, to the member from Leeds—Grenville, I understand what he's saying, and I appreciate that he raised that concern. I think there's a way that we can all work this out together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakubuski: It's a pleasure to make a two-minute comment on Bill 162. I did hear a comment from the Minister of Health saying that if children are obese, the odds of them being obese adults go up significantly. She's dead on in that. I'm not so sure about some of the other stuff in the bill.

Recently, a fellow gave me a calendar, and it was photos from the 1930s and 1940s in a local factory in the Pembroke area. Incidentally they were all men, but that was part of the culture at the time as well. But every one of the persons working in that factory was thin, because they all worked hard physically for a living, and they all ate less.

Obesity is the biggest problem we've got in our society right now as far as health is concerned going forward, in my opinion. I'm not an expert, but sometimes the experts don't really have it right either.

But here's the issue: Every one of our approaches to obesity has been very weak, very soft. Nobody wants to call a spade a spade. They want to find some namby-pamby way of thinking we're going to fix obesity. We figure if we put calorie counts on menus, that's just going to be the panacea. That's not going to work.

We've got to change the way people think. Parents have to be proactive, really proactive, in their children's health from day one—from day one. And we have to be double what we used to be, because the diversions and all of the things available to children to take them away from physical activity are much, much greater than they were when I was a kid and far greater than they were when my father would have been a child. We have to be very proactive about this, and we can't beat around the bush. If we're going to take care of obesity, it's got to start early, and it's got to be something we're absolutely committed to as parents and a society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has a two-minute response.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to say thanks to the members from Leeds–Grenville, Kitchener–Waterloo, Oak Ridges–Markham, Ottawa South, Kitchener Centre and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I want to really focus my comments on enthusiastic comments made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He says, and I think he's right, that the biggest challenges we have in health care are those conditions which we create. They are diseases of wealth as much as they are diseases of infection that we used to fight in the health care system.

I completely support his argument that parents must be proactive in the health of their children. If he hasn't already read the Healthy Kids Panel report, I'll make sure he has a copy, because it speaks to many different things that need to happen in our society and in our families so that we actually stem the increase and begin to decrease the rates of childhood obesity in this province.

This legislation is one piece. It is not a panacea. This alone will not solve the problem, but it is one piece that gets us on track to giving parents the information they need to make healthier choices in the context of a society where eating out is the norm. Our families are busy. Parents need the information they need to make healthier choices.

Just yesterday I was in Ottawa, and happy to announce breastfeeding supports there as well as an expansion of a community health centre—big focus on the importance of getting kids off to a healthy start, and that includes supporting breastfeeding. It's all part of a strategy that, taken collectively, will begin to change the trajectory of the health of our kids. That's why I really think it's important that all of us join together to move this forward as quickly as we can.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I seek unanimous consent to defer our one-hour lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Dufferin–Caledon seeks unanimous consent to step down on their one-hour lead. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's an honour to rise this morning to discuss Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act, on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon.

Bill 162 is basically the follow-up to the government's announcement at a McDonald's restaurant late last year that was going to bring forward legislation to require restaurants to list calories on their menus and reduce advertising to children.

This is standard form for this Premier and her government: Make a press conference announcing a new initiative, introduce a bill thereafter that is short on details and leaves much to regulation, and then schedule the next press conference for the next initiative. In this case, I do find it interesting that Bill 162 was actually introduced on February 24. We are now mid-April and this is, today, in the chamber, the first time we're discussing this piece of legislation.

It's actually one of the reasons I'm glad I have the opportunity to speak to Bill 162 this morning, because I think this bill is the perfect example of something I've been talking about here lately in the chamber. What I'm referring to is the fact that sometimes, when you have too many priorities, you have no priorities.

What I mean by this is that we've seen many, many government bills come through this chamber in the last year under Premier Wynne. Indeed, many even have received royal assent. Yet still, we see no clear jobs plan from this government. Still, we see absolutely no plan or regard for the drastic overspending that has occurred under the Liberal government. To be honest, based on what we've seen so far from this Premier and finance minister, I would question whether they even think that an \$11-billion-plus annual budget deficit is even a problem.

But even if we put aside the two most important pressing issues before Ontario currently that the government has no plan on—the job crisis and the out-of-control deficit spending—we still see little or no focus on any major issues. We see bills like Bill 162 announced and subsequently introduced months later, and yet we always seem to see only half measures. This lack of focus is not lost on Ontarians.

Earlier this month, the Orangeville Lions Club hosted their annual spring home show in Dufferin county. It's a great event, and this year didn't disappoint. It's one of the busiest shows I can remember, actually. As always, the Lions did a fantastic job of organizing. I go to the show every year, and with this year being so busy, it was an even better opportunity than usual to hear what people in Dufferin–Caledon are saying about the Liberal government and their priorities. I can tell you, Speaker, I didn't hear a single question or issue raised about Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I didn't hear anything about Bill 55 either, the Stronger Protection for Ontario

Consumers Act. I didn't hear anything about Bill 30, the Liberal government's tanning bed bill, or about Bill 138, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act. Now, without a doubt, these are all very catchy titles, but they do not speak to the issues that Ontario residents are concerned about.

So while bills like these and the one before us here today, which seeks to require restaurants and fast-food chains to display calorie counts on their menus, may be admirable goals or worthy of discussion, I would argue that these bills are not representative of Ontarians' priorities, because I didn't hear about any of these government bills. What I did hear about was the \$1.1 billion this government spent to save a handful of its MPPs' seats. What I did hear about, actually, is what remains the number one issue from Dufferin-Caledon residents and that's the skyrocketing price of electricity under this government. Will Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act, impact individuals with their concerns? No.

I hear from families about how they're worried about how they're going to be able to afford that extra family night out or new soccer equipment for their son or daughter because they are worried that their gas bills have gone up by 40%. Dufferin-Caledon families are worried about these rising costs of living because they may not have seen their paycheque rise substantially these past few years, and they've seen, every year, more fees, more charges, higher taxes.

So, Speaker, when we—
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew, your member is speaking and you're holding court over there. It's so loud, I'm having trouble hearing her. So be nice, if you can. The minister might want to hear what she has to say. Thank you.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thanks, Speaker.

So when we discuss legislation like Bill 162, we have to ask ourselves: At what point does the government acting a little bit on many issues become counterproductive? I think, rather than act a little bit on a lot of issues, the government should focus on doing a lot on one issue, and that's creating jobs here in Ontario. I know that would be priority number one under a Tim Hudak PC government. Again, when you have too many priorities, you have no priorities.

As I mentioned, however, Bill 162 in and of itself is not entirely without merit. This bill is being showcased by the Liberal government as an effort to curb obesity, particularly childhood obesity. No doubt about it, this is a very serious issue and one that every parent needs to be aware of.

The problem isn't with the government highlighting an issue like child obesity. The problem is, will Bill 162 actually help? What difference, if any, will Bill 162 actually make? There are a number of problems with this legislation, not the least of which being that it leaves much to be determined by regulation.

First off, however, I want to briefly overview what the bill actually does and does not do. As I have mentioned,

were Bill 162 to become law, owners and operators of "regulated food service premises" would be required to display the number of calories in each standard food item. They would also be required to include a contextual statement that is supposed to inform patrons about their daily caloric requirements—for example, "The average adult is recommended to consume X number of calories per day," that sort of thing.

Bill 162 would also authorize public health inspectors to monitor and enforce these labelling requirements and issue fines to those who aren't complying with the new rules. The fines would be \$500 for the first offence, \$1,000 for subsequent offences for individuals, and \$5,000 for the first and \$10,000 for subsequent offences for corporations. Here's the catch, though: How this information would have to be displayed and what, if anything, would be exempt is left to regulation.

I will acknowledge that the government has committed to consultation with stakeholders as those regulations are being crafted, but nonetheless, this is a continuing thread with this government, where they leave significant portions of legislation to regulation.

How the information is displayed is arguably as important as whether it is required to be displayed at all. Yet as we debate this bill here this morning, we have no idea how this information will be displayed, as the government is basically telling us, "We'll figure that out later."

These labelling and display requirements would affect "regulated food service premises," which are defined as places that sell meals for immediate consumption with 20-plus locations that operate under the same name. So this includes the fast-food operators in grocery stores, as well as other locations that are brought under the act by regulation. There is that regulation approach again.

So that's the basis of the bill, and here are some of the key issues with it. First of all, Bill 162 would extend to alcoholic beverages. So owners and operators would have to display calories and the contextual statement, I presume, on alcoholic beverages as well as food. Tell me, Speaker, how on earth does this impact childhood obesity? I don't understand how anyone could possibly argue that displaying calorie counts beside alcoholic drinks would have an impact on childhood obesity.

Continuing on the question of whether Bill 162 will affect the childhood obesity issue, I want to touch on the government's failed attempt to introduce healthy lunches in our schools, yet another previous announcement and initiative. This, too, was a lauded and notable program, but, due to lack of Liberal follow-through, seems to have failed miserably.

I will highlight an article that Karen Howlett from the Globe and Mail wrote in December, where it talks about "Ontario Schools' Healthy Menus Have Students Seeking Fast Food Elsewhere, Auditor Says." This says it all. The article begins with:

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"It was a noble policy aimed at combatting childhood obesity.

"French fries, burgers and chicken nuggets were all banished from school cafeterias across Ontario, and replaced with healthier fare....

"But the Ontario government's much-vaunted Healthy Schools Strategy—part of former Premier Dalton McGuinty's platform in the 2007 election campaign—has been a dismal failure, says the provincial auditor in her 2013 annual report.

"Students have abandoned the school cafeteria," said the Ontario Auditor General in her report.

"High-school principals told us that many students head to fast-food places instead," Ms. Lysyk said.

"At schools in three boards visited by auditors, the report says, cafeteria sales plunged by 25% to 45% after the province introduced healthier food choices in 2010. Vending machine sales dropped even further—by as much as 85%.

"The idea behind the policy was to ban junk food high in fat, salt or sugar from school cafeteria menus. But at one unidentified school where the auditors sampled the cafeteria fare, many menu items did not meet the nutritional criteria.... A bowl of soup, for example, contained twice the amount of fat allowed under the Healthy Schools Strategy.

"The government introduced the policy to tackle a dramatic increase in the number of overweight children. Nearly one in three students is overweight, says the auditor's report. And almost 12% are considered obese—nearly twice as many as in the late 1970s.

"But the auditor says in her report that neither the Ministry of Education nor the school boards have monitored the food and drinks sold in cafeterias to ensure that they comply with the government's nutrition standards.

"As well, the auditor says, there is no formal monitoring to ensure that students in grades 1 to 8 get 20 minutes of daily physical activity as prescribed under the Healthy Schools Strategy."

As a parent, I can speak to that issue because, as you know, we've had many, many no bus days; 15 was my last count in Dufferin-Caledon. Some schools have taken it upon themselves to remove the 20-minutes of DPA as they call it, daily physical activity, to make up the time. So even though the 20 minutes of daily physical activity is prescribed by the Legislature, by the government, school boards are removing that and not even ensuring that the kids get the 20 minutes.

We understand that we need to deal with childhood obesity. My question is: Does Bill 162 touch on it? I had an excellent meeting with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture last week, and they are raising this issue. Their suggestion—which I actually told them seemed like a low bar—was that upon graduation, students should be able to prepare six meals from scratch. When I think of my own family situation, when I think of my own children, I can't imagine that at 17 I would have a son or a daughter who could only prepare six meals. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture believes that that's where we have to start. I think that that is a laudable goal. If you want to make a difference in childhood obesity, in gener-

al obesity, then people have to understand how meals are prepared, what's in them and what the impact of it is.

Very briefly, I read an article that talked about how to deal with obesity, how to deal with a society that seems to be getting bigger and not healthier. The article stated that your health is based 80% on what you do, and 20% is based on what you put in your mouth. Is Bill 162 actually going to deal with childhood obesity and ensure that our kids are healthier adults? I don't think it is. I don't think the goal that you are trying to achieve is going to happen as a result of Bill 162.

I gather the government's response is to force these restaurants to display the calorie counts, but will it actually make a difference? I'm not sure it will. Do our children really not know that the double cheeseburger from the fast-food restaurant is high in calories? Or do they know, and they don't care? I don't believe Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act, will help with the issue of childhood obesity.

I will not be supporting this bill in its current form because I think that the issue of childhood obesity is an important issue that deserves a thoughtful and well-thought-out approach. Bill 162 isn't that approach, and that's why I can't support this legislation.

I've given a few examples. I'm blessed to have an Olympic athlete in my extended family. There was one article I was reading about one of the rowers. For breakfast, he consumes 10,000 calories. It's not what you put in; it's what you do after you eat.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Input and output.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Yes. Junk in, junk out: I get that. We have to make sure that, as parents, as a society, we give options. Simply putting an apple on someone's chair or in the cafeteria does not mean that they're going to eat it, and it does not mean they're going to choose that over a granola bar that happens to be high in calories, or something worse.

I think that, collectively, society can do a better job of explaining the cause and effect of eating; making poor choices; eating, for lack of a better word, stuff that isn't going to make our bodies healthier—but Bill 162 is not that solution.

The reality is, you can go and ask at any McDonald's restaurant, any of the fast-food chains—right now, they do provide a list of what the calorie choices are. Speaking as a mother of a teenager and a soon-to-be teenager, I can tell you with a great deal of certainty, that is not how they choose what they are going to order off that fast-food menu. What does make a difference is what their parents are eating and what is provided to them on a regular basis for their meals at home. To suggest that Bill 162 is going to be the solution for childhood obesity, and ultimately a healthier society—I think we're misleading ourselves.

I think that there are better ways that we can focus. I'll go back to the 20 minutes of DPA, daily physical activity. The Minister of Education is in the chamber. I would suggest to her that she needs to reinforce with school boards and principals the value, the importance of those 20 minutes. We legislated that as MPPs, so now we have

to make sure that it's actually being followed through and that the kids are getting that 20 minutes. That regular activity and that consistency of having the daily physical activity is going to go much further than limiting or posting calorie counts at a fast-food joint.

I would also suggest that there are ways we can do it that involve the parents and the caregivers, to ensure that we are doing a proper job of educating and informing our children.

We all know that when we smoke, there are health repercussions. Are we telling our kids that when they have French fries five days a week, there are health repercussions? I don't know. If we're not, we need to. Is that a government role? I don't believe it is. I think that, ultimately, there has to be some participation and some understanding. And to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's point, if there is a large segment of society that doesn't understand how to prepare a proper meal without high-in-fat, processed, salty items, then let's deal with that and let's educate and inform people. But Bill 162 is not going to accomplish that goal.

I would just finish with, if we have some priorities, if we have some concerns that we want to raise, let's focus on those. Bill 162 is not the solution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to contribute to the debate today for Bill 162, An Act to require certain food service premises to display nutritional information.

Speaker, the title of the bill is pretty clear. They would like service industries that provide us with food to make sure that people can make educated choices when they're picking items off the menu to eat at mealtime.

Oftentimes, and what we heard the member from Dufferin-Caledon talking about, it's lifestyle choices. We all have a part to play in our own health and our lifestyle choices, in what we eat and how we choose to have extracurricular activity in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

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Part of that, though, is that we have a busy lifestyle. Ontarians, Canadians—parents usually are both working. They're running the kids off to soccer. There are all kinds of activities going on after work, and a lot of them run in and grab a quick meal on the run. I think it's important that they can have that option to know what the calorie count is on one choice as opposed to the other.

I can tell you that there are many restaurants now that have decided that instead of just offering the fries, they have a side dish of salad. I'm very impressed with a lot of teenagers I see. When I go into a fast-food restaurant at times as well to pick up a quick meal, they're ordering the salad. I think it is making an impact that we educate our generation, our youth today, our adults today to make sure that we can make healthier choices. It is possible. I think posting information when people are ordering can help people make healthier choices.

The bill, I'm sure, needs to be strengthened. I know our health critic here, France Gélinas, will be speaking to it. I look forward to hearing France's speech later today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened attentively to the member from Dufferin-Caledon. She always has very interesting things to say. But I'm disappointed in her speech today because this is a small but important step that would help young people especially deal with this epidemic of diabetes we have across this province that's a huge cost to our health care system.

To say that we should be doing all these grandiose things—when we come forward with one meaningful step, “No, we don't agree with it.” So if you don't take that first step to help kids especially—because they're being bombarded around the clock by these ads for fast food: “Eat pizza.” “Eat hamburgers.” “Drink Coke.” It's non-stop on the Internet, on the radio and on television. At least we can give them a bit of help to deal with this bombardment.

These mega-multi-billion dollar international corporations that sell fat, sugar and fructose around the clock—our kids deserve a little bit of protection. All we're saying is let the kids know and let adults know.

There's the member from Durham there supporting the big fast-food industry; I know. But we've got to give the kids a bit of information. The kids are smart. They'll see. Why should you take that super-hyper Big Mac for 3,000 calories when you may be able to get a chicken sandwich—still not that great—for maybe 1,000? Just give the kids some information. The member from Durham disagrees with this. He says that Coke and McDonald's are great for kids. They're not.

They have to give some information. That's all this bill asks for, some simple information about how much fat is in that fast food that's killing a lot of people prematurely. We've got to take this step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's amazing; we've been talking a lot about McDonald's. I'm thinking that they're getting all kinds of advertising just this morning on this particular discussion.

Unfortunately, when we take a look at this particular bill, there is no silver bullet, as one might say, to correct everything. I have concerns about childhood obesity, as everyone in this particular Legislature has. But you know what? You talk about making sure that all the food manufacturers and so on list—and people are getting in the habit now. They go to the grocery store, especially parents, and they'll look at how many calories, how many carbohydrates, what's the sodium, the salt content and so on. I think that's a good idea.

But again, when we talk about childhood obesity and we take a look at children, I really think, as has been mentioned by my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon, that you take a look at education. It should start in the house. You talk about calories. You talk about educating our kids. You take a look at the calorie intake. You take a look at the carbohydrate intake. Cut back on the sugars. Cut back on the salts. Cut back on the breads—all that

stuff that seems to kind of puff us up. I used to say, if you're hungry, you have a hole, you fill it, and so on. But I think we really need to take a good, hard look at that.

Maybe one of the things we need to look at, from an educational point of view, is maybe making it mandatory for kids in high school—for example, instead of taking one credit in high school for health and phys. ed., you make it mandatory for four: one for every year. Then it's a constant reminder for these children, and, of course, not only from the health side, educational, but also on the physical side, they get active. So I think it's very important that we take a look at this.

Let's not create more red tape. Unfortunately, I can't support Bill 162.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was quite interesting to listen to the MPP talk about the lack of focus and the half measures. In some ways, I will tend to agree with what she said, that a lot of what is being put forward is being put forward with really no clear intention of bringing it to the finish line.

On my side of the House, I'm truly committed to making sure that this, the calorie labelling, makes it to the finish line. It is something that I have been working on for a very long time.

Unfortunately, it is true that the minister brought this idea forward last fall and introduced it for first reading in February of this year, and two and a half months later, the Conservatives haven't even done their lead, and I'm about to start mine. When you have over 180 bills on the docket that need to be dealt with and then you see those ideas being floated forward but not being called for first and second reading—I have a bill very, very similar to this, Bill 149, that has passed second reading. If what we're really interested in is making it to the finish line, making sure that the next time you go to McDonald's, you will see "Big Mac: \$2.99, 540 calories," then there is a way to get to the finish line way faster. My bill has passed second reading. It is sitting in committee, and we could have debate on it and a public hearing this week, clause-by-clause next week, and it would be done. But no. We are bringing the minister's bill, very similar to mine, for second reading for the first time.

The member is right: Are they really committed to this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Dufferin-Caledon has two minutes.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the comments from London-Fanshawe, Eglinton-Lawrence, Chatham-Kent-Essex and Nickel Belt.

I particularly liked the "lifestyle choice" line from the London-Fanshawe member. I'm a parent, so I view things in a bit of a different area. It is about lifestyle choice. It is about risk versus reward. It is about explaining to our children, to our nieces, to our nephews, to anybody who will listen, basically, what happens when you consume these items.

Can you have the occasional bottle of pop? Absolutely. But you don't need to have it for breakfast, lunch and

dinner. I think that's ultimately the responsibility that we have to explain to people. It's not about, "This is bad; this is good." There are quality products that, if you ate them regularly, would not be healthy for you. I'll talk about potatoes. Potatoes happen to be a product that is grown in abundance in Dufferin-Caledon. I would never suggest to anyone that they should be eating potatoes for breakfast, lunch and dinner, but it is a healthy product. So we have to be able to make choices, to understand what those choices are and to educate our people.

Lifestyle choice, what you put in, how active you are: all play a role in, ultimately, how healthy and active society is. It helps us in our education and learning. It helps us in our health care in controlling costs. So there is an opportunity here, but I can't see Bill 162 solving it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

1000

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to do my one-hour lead on Bill 162, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I realize that I will have to do this lead in two steps, but I will use my first 15 minutes wisely and get as much on the record as I can. The reason I do this is because I seriously don't know how committed the government is to bringing this to the finish line, and I'm really worried that two and a half months after the government introduced this bill for the first time we are just doing our leads now.

This is the first time we have had an opportunity to talk about this bill; yet, it was announced with a big press conference by the minister last fall at a McDonald's. I attended, and a lot of people were in support. She finally introduced the bill on February 24 of this year, and we're finally starting to talk about it. My 15 minutes may be it, Mr. Speaker, so listen carefully. This may be the last time you hear about this bill. Hopefully I'm wrong.

So I think it's no surprise to anyone who has been following what's going on at Queen's Park that this is an issue that the NDP has been pushing for a long, long time, and I want to take you a little bit through the chronology of the bill. The first version of my bill was called the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, and I introduced it for first reading in March 2009—so more than five years ago, Mr. Speaker. The bill was then Bill 156.

It went to second reading on April 9, 2009, and it passed second reading. I remember you were there with me, Speaker, when this particular event happened, and I will always remember that there hadn't been much time between the introduction for first reading and bringing it for second reading, as a private member's bill, and the restaurant industry had come out in full force. The number of lobbyists on the lobbying registry had jumped in a way that we had rarely seen, and they were all here at Queen's Park with one goal: to make sure that this bill didn't pass.

I was sitting in the third row with you at the time, Speaker, making my points, trying to bring this bill forward, and the gallery on the east side was packed. They

were all restaurant lobbyists, all wearing their little T-shirts that said, “The Keg,” “Montana’s,” “Harvey’s”—all of the big chain industries. They were all there and they were all staring me down to the point where, if a stare could have made me drop dead—I think this is what they had wished. But I survived, and not only did I survive the stare, but the bill went through.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, the bill went through. I have to be honest, it was an open vote—not something we see very often lately, but at the time it was an open vote. Some of the Liberals voted for and some voted against, and it passed by three votes—not a ringing endorsement or anything, but this is a democracy, and it passed by three votes, so it passed. It went to second reading. I was quite proud of my colleagues and the people who had helped make this bill pass second reading. And then it sat there.

At the time, we had a majority Liberal government. They were the ones who would decide by themselves which bills were to be called for committee work, and my bill stayed at the bottom of the pile until the House prorogued, and then that was the end of that effort.

So that was back in 2009. Since then, I have reintroduced the bill and the work continued to be done. I have met with the restaurant industry, with the beverage industry and with the manufacturers a number of times to try to take into account their reality. At the same time, an ever-growing number of health agencies came behind me and supported the idea.

After the House prorogued, which meant that after all of those efforts the bill had died, I reintroduced it in June 2010. It was called, again, Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating, and the bill number was then 90. Bill 90 was very simple. It required the disclosure of calories on restaurant menus, and the restaurants were defined as the big ones. They have to have at least five sites in Ontario and at least an income of \$5 million. Basically, all we’re asking them to do is—the big chains already have that information. They already have brochures and websites and posters that tell you that information, but the way we have it now is that this information is on a poster on the way to the bathroom, or in a brochure under the counter that nobody can find, or on a website that you look at after you’re sitting down with your meal, after you have already ordered. All we’re asking them to do is to take that information from the way they’re giving it to us now and put it on the menu board.

The reason that the chain has to be big enough is that, in order for this to work, the portions in the recipes have to be very standardized. If you go to a McDonald’s or a Keg or a Harvey’s, the portion size in the recipes are all ways the same; therefore, when you put the number of calories, you know what you’re talking about. The mom-and-pop restaurants, who basically cook with—if carrots are in season, they do carrots; if tomatoes are in season, they cook with this. They have no idea how many calories are in the food that they’re putting on their menu, and that’s fine. We’re not asking them to do this calorie count, which requires a little bit of time, effort, energy

and knowledge. We wouldn’t expect the little mom-and-pop restaurants to have that information, but we do expect the big chains, including all of the grocery stores that are selling more and more meals to bring home, to have that information, and that’s what we were asking them to do.

We’ve gone through Bill 156 once. It passed second reading. Then, prorogue: It means that the giant eraser, the magic eraser from Mr. Clean, was applied to it—gone. Reintroduced as Bill 90 in 2010, and then again the House prorogued. That time, it was—I never had a chance to bring it for second reading before the 2011 election. So that bill died.

Not to be outdone, after the 2011 election came 2012, when I reintroduced the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act. It was now labelled Bill 86. By the time I reintroduced it in 2012, I would say that most of the people who know nutrition—and I’m not part of that select group—had really convinced me that the body of evidence was there to not only put the number of calories on the menu board but to add a flag for high and very high sodium. I will explain the health effects of this a little bit later.

By the time 2012 came around, I reintroduced the same bill, Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating. It was now called Bill 86, and not only do we mandate the number of calories beside every item on the menu, but we also mandate a flag. I’m sure, when you go to restaurants, sometimes when you open the menu you will see a little pepper that tells you, “This thing is spicy,” or you will see a sign for vegan or vegetarian etc. The flag is the sign to let you know that this item has either high or very high sodium content. So that’s Bill 86.

1010

In October 2012, I was getting ready for second reading, and we all remember that that week, just before my second member ballot was to come on that Thursday, the House prorogued. That was when then-Premier McGuinty decided to leave us and prorogue the House in the process. I have said before that I took that a little bit personally, because my private member’s bill was coming. But apparently he had other reasons for leaving and proroguing.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I don’t think it was all about you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was not all about me, I know. I agree; I agree. Nevertheless, my bill died once again.

But I’m a patient person. I’m very perseverant. When I see something, I don’t let go. So in 2013, I reintroduced the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act as well as Healthy Decisions Made Easy, where I put together a few health promotion ideas, one of the ones being menu labelling as well as a flag for high sodium. I’m happy to say that on February 20 of this year, I had the chance to debate this bill for second reading. I’m really proud of all of my colleagues in this House. All of the MPPs decided to support my bill, Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy, and it passed second reading on February 20 of this year.

It has then been sitting on the docket of a standing committee of the Legislature, and could so easily be

moved forward. We are presently debating a bill which has a brother very, very similar to it that has already made it to second reading. I don't understand why we don't just go to Bill 149, call it at committee and be done with something that is so, so small but, at the same time, could be so significant.

I agree with everything that has been said. Will posting calories on menus and menu boards reverse the obesity crisis? Of course not; of course not. It's not going to do this. But it's going to give people information that they want.

I've been working on this for over five years. There have been more polls done by restaurant associations, by public health units, by everybody else on this. Did you know, Speaker, that 95% of Ontarians want to see calories on their menu boards? Ninety-five per cent of Ontarians want to have that information. Isn't that reason enough to give it to them? Is it going to change the world and reverse the obesity epidemic? No, but it's going to give them information to make healthier choices for themselves and for their family. Very, very seldom can we see an issue that unites all Ontarians to the point where 95% of us vote in the same direction and say, "Yes, we want this."

Sure, it leaves 5% who don't, but frankly, Speaker, you could offer paradise and some people wouldn't want it. Am I hoping to get 100%? No. We're never going to get 100%, but 95% in our kind of work is pretty hard to get.

This is where this bill pulls at. Ontarians have told us they understand that they need more than just calorie information, and they understand that they need more than just a sodium flag, but they see it as a good step, a step in the right direction, a step that will help them make healthy decisions. And the science behind it supports them.

People who travel will know that if you go south of the border, if you go into the States, McDonald's has taken it upon themselves to put menu labelling in all of their restaurant chains. I used to remember the number of tens of thousands of McDonald's in the States—I forgot what the number is—but all of them, within a period of one week, had their menus and menu boards changed to add the calories on them.

We have the state of New York and the city of New York that have had a similar bill, where they have mandated restaurants to put the calories right on the menus and menu boards. Did it change the world? No. But when you look at a public health issue as important as obesity—in the public health world, they will tell you that the biggest threat to human health after cigarettes in our province and in our country is obesity. Now, in states, in provinces and in places where you put menu labelling, where you put the number of calories directly on the menu or the menu board, people use that to make healthy choices. People use that to make choices that, on average, will go from a low of 75 calories less per order to a high of about 150 calories less per order.

You may look at this and say, "Well, what's 100 calories more or less?" But when you apply it to the millions of people who eat in restaurants each and every single

day, on a public health scale it's a game-changer. You are on a path to making healthier changes because you will consume less calories, and if you don't change anything else—I mean I agree with the member for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The time has expired. It's now 10:15. We'll continue with the debate next time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House is recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to give credit where credit is due. Sometimes when we come here to do our jobs, people provide us with assistance and make us look good. I'll introduce my constituency assistant Cindy Restoule. She's all the way up here from Elliot Lake.

Ms. Soo Wong: I am shortly joined by students in grade 7 from Kennedy Public School and Terry Fox Public School, along with their teachers Mrs. Mohamed and Ms. Chan, and the vice-principal, Debbie Tierney. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is my pleasure to welcome page captain Calvin Devries and his cousin A.J. Jonker—who is a former page from the spring session 2013—and his aunt Cathy Jonker, who will be in the gallery this morning. Welcome. Calvin, thanks for all that you've done while you've been here.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to introduce Marty Sarkisian and Andy Petrowski. Andy is a regional councillor from Niagara. Marty is a citizen from the Niagara region and a GM retiree.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un très grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à M. Jean-Yves Léonard, le président de Valoris, et au directeur exécutif de Valoris, M. Raymond Lemay, who are here today. We met with Minister McMeekin and had a great meeting. I wish them a great day at question period and Queen's Park. Merci beaucoup.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our page captain for today, Callista Laffrenier, and to welcome once again her mother, Karen, in the public gallery.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The page Isabella O'Brien, who is from my riding, has enticed some friends, Claire Hunter and Jessica Bohm, to be with us today. Who knows, maybe they'll be here as pages too. We would like to welcome them to the assembly this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when you came in with your transition team after becoming Liberal leader, you sat down with David

Livingston and the outgoing staff. In that first meeting, I imagine that you told Mr. Livingston to protect all documents around the gas plant scandal.

Can you answer a simple yes or no question: Did you direct David Livingston to preserve all documents, including emails, related to the gas plant scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, I did not direct David Livingston. He was the chief of staff to the former Premier. He was never my staff. I never directed him in any way whatsoever.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm absolutely perplexed, Premier. You were the leader of the Liberal Party, you were the incoming Premier, and you gave no direction to preserve documents related to the gas plant scandal?

This is the difference between that Premier and how I would handle it. I would want the information; I would want it on the table; I would want all of the answers.

This tells me that you were either in on it or you looked the other way. I don't know what other conclusion we could reach, Premier. So are you telling me today that you made no effort whatsoever to get to the bottom of the gas plant scandal? You did not give, as one of your first directions, to preserve all documents so that taxpayers can get answers on where all that money went and who benefited?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are two parts to that question. I did not direct David Livingston. I did not direct the staff of the former Premier. I never did. They were the staff of another Premier. I did not direct them.

What I did do when I came into this office, and I said that I was going to do it during my leadership: I opened up—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also heard something that I've said in the past I don't like to hear. If I hear it again, I'll try to pinpoint who said it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I did exactly what I said I was going to do, which was to make sure that all the documents that were being asked for were turned over, that they were made public, that the committee had the scope to be able to ask the necessary questions about the whole issue around the relocation of the gas plants. That's what I committed to, and that's what I did when I came into this office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you looked the other way. The first question I would have asked as Premier is, get all the facts on the table. Don't let any documents be destroyed. I can't believe you looked the other way. That makes you complicit in this scandal. You either knew and allowed it to happen or you looked the other way, both of which disqualify you from being trusted to run

the province of Ontario. I'm still absolutely incredulous you didn't ask that basic question. It sounds like your first goal was plausible deniability.

Let me give another example. I know this man, a hero of yours, Paul Martin: much to be admired about his record as finance minister in Canada. Many of his campaign team are now part of your team. At least he did the right thing when there were allegations of criminal behaviour. He called a judicial inquiry. It's called the Gomery inquiry. I would call a judicial inquiry.

My question is this: I would. Paul Martin did. Why didn't you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear with the Leader of the Opposition. My office preserved documents. In fact, we turned over 30,000 pages of documentation to the committee. We know that the scope of the committee was changed, that the questions that were being asked were being answered, because I made it clear when I came into this office that that was going to be our *modus operandi*. That is what we committed to. That is what I have done. I did not direct the staff of the former Premier.

We changed the rules around preserving documents. We made sure that all staff in my government had training so that they would understand the rules around preserving documents. I upheld that commitment that I made as I came into the leadership.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. Premier, you've threatened a lawsuit on me, on my colleague from Nepean—Carleton. You have tried to shut down debate. I'll tell you this directly: We won't cease. We won't desist. We will pursue this and get facts for the taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I only wish, Premier, that you would put as much energy as you are into suing the opposition to actually get answers for taxpayers, to hold Liberals to account: instead of looking the other way, instead of giving promotions, to actually hold those Liberals to account. I can't believe you didn't ask the basic questions. I can't believe you won't call a judicial inquiry. Why are you pointing at us? Why don't you point at your own team and hold them to account?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, during the transition from the former Premier's tenure until mine, I asked the Auditor General to examine the costs of the relocation of the gas plants. My staff worked with the staff of the Leader of the Opposition to make sure we set up the committee. That commitment that I made to open up the process was upheld. That's exactly what we did.

As for my willingness to engage in debate, I am willing any time to engage in debate while we are talking about facts. I have said that, and I have engaged in debate

in this House day after day. I have appeared before committee twice. I have said exactly what my role was and what I knew to be the truth, Mr. Speaker. I will have that debate any time. But when it comes to false allegations, I will not debate false allegations.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order. And I know what I'm doing.

Supplementary question, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I think the language from the aboriginal affairs minister says what their plan is. He just said, "Get your chequebook out, Tim."

This is all about trying to intimidate the opposition. You're trying to shut us down from asking legitimate questions. You have ordered us to cease and desist asking the tough questions. My team and I will not cease—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing noises on both sides, actually, when he's trying to put the question. Come to order.

Please finish.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You've asked us to cease and desist. We're not going to cease; we're not going to desist. We're going to pursue the facts as far as they lead. This looks like a Premier who is more interested in putting things under the carpet than getting in the facts.

I'll ask you a very simple question: Premier, why don't you put the same energy into finding and holding the Liberals accountable who may have committed these crimes? Why don't you put that level of energy that you put into the lawsuit into actually getting taxpayers in the province of Ontario—this is all about your—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition that all my energy goes into making sure that we make the right decisions for the people of Ontario. That's what my energy goes into, Mr. Speaker. Part of that, when I came into this leadership, into this role, was to make sure that we had the questions answered that were being asked about the relocation of the gas plants. That's why I asked the AG to do an investigation. That's why we opened up the committee. That's why we changed the rules around the siting of energy infrastructure and we changed the rules around preservation of documents.

Far from wanting to shut down debate, I opened up the debate. I wanted the debate opened up. That is the kind of debate that I think the people of Ontario deserve.

What the people of Ontario do not deserve is that we not deal with the facts. I believe that dealing with the facts is what must happen if we're going to have a healthy political debate in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—

ary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, with all due respect, threatening lawsuits is not about democratic debate; it's about shutting them down. That's what your plan is.

Secondly, if you truly were interested in getting the facts, you would have made sure that documents were not destroyed. These are OPP anti-rackets division criminal allegations that took place in the Premier's office. You were in charge at the time.

I know you're an intelligent woman. I know you're dedicated to your job. But respect our intelligence too. We simply don't believe that Peter Faist could have gone in and destroyed documents on up to 24 computers, called himself Wendy Wai, used a password, and you never knew. None of those 24 staffers called it to your attention, your chief of staff? I don't think there is a single person in the province of Ontario who believes that alibi. It's simply not credible.

Premier, let me ask you this: Will you finally do the right thing? If you really want the facts, call a judicial inquiry, just like your hero Paul Martin did—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's hear what OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis said. He said, "I am told by our investigators that the OPP is receiving good co-operation from senior government officials in this matter." There was full co-operation. That's February 27, 2014.

The Auditor General, in October 2013, said, "I did have the opportunity to meet with the Premier ... it was good to hear that they are taking the report seriously and they are taking some actions and changing the way things are going to be done in the future so that a situation like this doesn't evolve." That was October 8, 2013.

Dr. Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner: The Premier "has been fully co-operative with me and my office.... In fairness to Premier Wynne, she said, 'you have my full co-operation, whatever you want from us.'"

Mr. Speaker, we have done everything in our power to make sure that all of the information was available. We will continue to do that, but I am going to insist every time that we debate factual information.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier claims that she didn't learn about the widespread deletion of emails and wiping of computers until the OPP anti-rackets warrant was unsealed. When did her staff learn about the allegations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I am going to say exactly what I have said to the Leader of the Opposition and previously in this House: When I was in the leadership race, I knew that there needed to be a change in

terms of the way documentation was provided. I believed that there needed to be an opening-up of the process.

We did that. We opened up the scope of the process of the committee. We provided tens of thousands of documents to the committee. I have appeared before the committee twice, and we continue to co-operate in every way possible. That is what I said I would do, and that is what I have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier suggests that she knew nothing about allegations that computers were being wiped by senior Liberals, even though the OPP says that three of her current staff were among those who had their computers accessed and wiped.

Her Minister of Government Services says that he didn't want to know anything about an investigation. He never once discussed it with his chief of staff, even though the OPP said that her computer was one of the ones wiped.

Is the Premier also asserting that no one on her staff was keeping tabs on a file that could see senior Liberals facing jail time?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will repeat: I knew, coming into this office, that there was a lot of work that we were going to need to do in order to make sure that the process around the relocation of the gas plants was opened up, and that there were questions that were being asked that had not been answered. So I knew perfectly well that we were going to have to change the way that we were working with the opposition—and with the public, quite frankly—to make sure that all the information that was asked for was provided. I made that commitment. I knew, from the moment that I began the leadership race, long before I was in the Premier's office, that we were going to have to make changes and we were going to have to open up the process.

That's what we did. That's why we're having this discussion. We have co-operated with the committee and the ongoing investigation, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier claims she was in the dark. The House leader and Minister of Government Services claims he was in the dark. We're now being told that staff at every level not only didn't know what the OPP was investigating; they didn't know what their own internal investigations had found, and the Premier supposedly hasn't spoken to people she works with every single day about whether their computers were wiped.

The people stuck paying the bill for the gas plant scandal, the people whom the Premier is supposed to be accountable to, might find this just a little bit hard to believe. What does the Premier have to say to them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I have to say is that there is an independent police investigation ongoing. It's entirely independent, and that's as it should be. The OPP investigators have been working with the federal crown attorney. I know the leader of the third party knows that,

and that's in order to make sure that it is an independent inquiry. I will not interfere with that.

We are co-operating with both the requests from the committee and the investigation. That's what I said we would do, and that is what we're doing.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. The Minister of Government Services has produced a report, apparently, on their investigation into the 24 computers wiped in the Premier's office. Will the Premier release that report today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I believe that what the honourable member is referring to is a notice that is given in the document that was released by the courts some two weeks ago, where it talks about the OPP working with a branch of the Ministry of Government Services to help undertake their investigation.

As I've said in this House, as is appropriate for a minister, I was not aware of the details of what went on. I told my deputy minister that I didn't want to know about the details of any police investigation. I am still of the view that a police investigation should stay with the Ontario Provincial Police. I will in no way interfere with that investigation.

I would remind the member that when the OPP appeared in front of the committee, they talked about how political interference could actually jeopardize this investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier insists that this government is committed to transparency and openness. Why won't she make a government report, one that the people of Ontario paid for, available to the public?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: Speaker, there we have it. The leader of the New Democratic Party now believes that governments should interfere in the work of the Ontario Provincial Police.

I'm not sure how they do things over there, but on this side of the Legislature, when the Ontario Provincial Police is involved, we respect their independence and we get out of the way of their investigation. We don't interfere with their investigation.

What she is suggesting is incredible: that a leader of this party would ask a government to interfere in such an investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier keeps insisting that she's doing things differently, but all people see are reports being kept under wraps, senior Liberals fleeing the province and a Premier who claims she sees nothing, has heard nothing and has done nothing. Does she really think that is good enough for the people of this province?

Hon. John Milloy: Let's deal with facts. The member is making reference to a document, which I am only aware of due to the court document that was released some two weeks ago. I have no information about this report. I shouldn't have any information about this report because it was done as part of an investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police.

Again, I cannot believe that a leader of a political party would be standing up here and counselling the government to interfere in a police investigation. It is quite frankly beneath her. We respect the independence of the OPP, and we will continue to co-operate with them, but in no way interfere in their very important work.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question, as well, is to the Premier. The Premier suggests that for six weeks in 2013 no one was in charge in the Premier's office, that although she was elected on January 27, was using the Premier's office for meetings and was chairing the Liberal caucus on January 30, she still says that she wasn't in charge. The OPP says that the transition happened immediately, yet the Premier disagrees.

What I find interesting is that one of the alleged hard drives that was wiped was a staff member's of the current Premier, and the Premier must understand how this looks. So I'm asking her, can the Premier tell us how Brianna Ames's computer came to be wiped on February 6 if she did not work in the Premier's office until after February 11?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I would suggest that the honourable member do two things: First of all, review the court documents, which gives us a glimpse into an OPP investigation; then it talks about one person who is right now the subject of these allegations—unproven—and that is the former chief of staff to the former Premier, for activities that happened under his watch.

The second thing I would ask is that she start dealing with the facts and apologize for all that she has said. She's had experience with this before: her involvement with Bluedraft. She knows that when a legal battle goes wrong, she sometimes has to apologize, and maybe she should consider it right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I won't apologize for asking the tough questions to get to the bottom of this scandal, and you'd better get used to that.

Why would Brianna Ames's hard drive be deleted prior to joining the Premier's office? I'll give a quick answer: It wouldn't have been.

The Premier chooses to believe that she was not Premier until February 11, so let's go with that for a moment. She would have hired Brianna Ames between February 11 and March 8, if that is the case, yet according to the OPP ITO, which, for the government House leader, is a fact, Brianna Ames's computer would have

been one of the 24 accessed between February 6 and March 20, 2013. That means when the computer was wiped, it would have taken place after the so-called delayed Premiership.

Will the Premier and the government House leader stop playing games, tell us the truth and get to the bottom of this scandal right now or call a judicial inquiry like my leader would?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, it is clear the OPP are interested in one individual, the former chief of staff of the former Premier, for events that happened under his watch.

But just to remind the member, let me quote: "The operators of www.bluedraft.com"—the member for Nepean—Carleton—"Ms. Lisa MacLeod and Chris Froggatt, would like to sincerely apologize to Maureen Murphy-Makin and Rick Morgan for wrongfully implicating them in an erroneous story in January 2004 ... We are sorry for the negative perception that may have been created since then and how it may have harmed the solid reputation and high integrity of both Ms. Murphy-Makin and Mr. Morgan.

"We admit that our sources were not reliable and proper accuracy and verification procedures were not followed prudently in publishing this story."

Mr. Speaker, she's done it once. It's time for her to do it again.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians deserve answers about the \$1.1-billion scandal and they deserve answers about the Liberals' subsequent email deletion and data destruction. Now, Liberal insiders, who the OPP say are behind the mass email deletions and computer wiping in the Premier's office, are playing games with the committee. Peter Faist insists he can't come to Toronto, and he won't be available for a whole month, weeks after the dates being thrown around for a budget.

We think he has important information and we want him here as soon as possible. Have any members of the Premier's party been in touch with Peter Faist about the timing of his testimony?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It is up to the committee to determine which witnesses to call; it's up to the committee Clerk, of course, to deal with those witnesses and try to schedule them. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, there are procedures in place if committees cannot obtain a witness's testimony. This is all work for the committee.

I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, since we're on the topic of the committee, how disappointed we are that we tried once again—I believe it's the 14th time; I'm not

making that figure up—to ask the PC witnesses to come before the committee on Thursday so they could talk about what I would have thought would have been—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: They could answer such questions as, when they promised in the last campaign that if they were elected they'd cancel the gas plants, whether they asked about costing, about the policy analysis that was done, about the interaction that they had with the Leader of the Opposition and others.

Fourteen times, and yet they refuse to come. It's very frustrating on this side of the House but, again, it's up to the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Laura Miller, a former deputy chief of staff in the Premier's office, has timed her visit to the committee to fall on a possible budget date announcement. Just like the cynical timing of the tanning bed legislation, which we learned, from internal Liberal staff emails which were made public last summer, the Liberals thought would "make a fabulous headline in Saturday papers" just to distract from scandal, this seems like another attempt to change the channel.

The timing, again, looks convenient for the Liberals. Did Ontario Liberals help Ms. Miller pick her date?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it is a case where they can't take "yes" for an answer. The committee has asked for certain people to come forward, and he mentions one witness who has made herself available. I understand, obviously, from media reports, that she is in British Columbia and she's coming forward and testifying before the committee. I think we should allow the committee to handle that work and handle that testimony.

Again, if the member is frustrated, we are frustrated. As I say, we have tried 14 times. I'll give you one example: the candidate for the PCs in the last election, a gentleman by the name of Zoran Churchin—he has actually been re-nominated and will be running again—we've called him 14 times.

We want to know who approved the robocall scripts, the flyers and campaign announcements promising to cancel the plant. We want to know about their costing during their campaign promises. I believe he was present when the Leader of the Opposition made his famous YouTube—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Minister, when Premier Wynne announced the Open Government Initiative last October,

she made a commitment to make Ontario the most open and transparent government in the country. Our goal is to change the way citizens think about and interact with their government, and ultimately to rethink government so that it works better for the people of Ontario.

An integral part of our Open Government plan is open data. Like governments around the world, Ontario generates and collects huge amounts of data, facts and statistics. A key Open Government commitment is to make the data we collect available to the public in machine-readable formats.

Minister, can you tell my constituents what is being done to make data more open in Ontario?

1100

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member not only for the question but for the important work that he has done in terms of open government. Making government data open by default—that is, the collection of statistics and other data that governments collect—is an important part of our Open Government plan. We launched our open data catalogue in 2012, which contains 178 sets of data available for the public to access online. In consultation with every ministry across the government, we've developed a master list of over 1,000 potential open data sets that could be posted online in our catalogue.

Yesterday we announced that instead of the government deciding which data sets to undergo the process of making them machine-readable, access them and release them, we will ask the people of Ontario to tell us their open data priorities by using an online voting tool—what the kids call crowdsourcing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Minister, for taking the opportunity to engage the public in open government and to find out what's important to them. Ontario has taken an exciting step on the road toward open data, as the first government in Canada to develop an organization-wide data inventory like this for public voting.

As data topics like traffic, student achievement and health care wait times become accessible, citizens and businesses with innovative ideas will find solutions to help people in their everyday lives and encourage economic growth throughout the province.

Minister, can you tell us more about this open data inventory and how it will work? What about safeguards for things like privacy and confidentiality?

Hon. John Milloy: Preparing and posting data sets is a complex process. Obviously, we must assess data to protect privacy, security and confidentiality. We must prepare it in an open, machine-readable format and review data to ensure accuracy and accessibility. This process can take between several weeks or even up to a year, depending on the volume and complexity of the data. That's why we want the public to help us focus our efforts so we can prepare the most sought-after data for priority posting.

As far as privacy protection goes—as you know, we take that very seriously—Ontario will release data in a

responsible way that protects the privacy of its citizens. The inventory does not include data containing personal or confidential information; legal copyright and security restrictions are protected; and public safety is prioritized above all.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, you announced yet another transit plan, but you still refused to tell Ontarians how you'll pay for it. Well, your Minister of Transportation let the cat out of the bag. He said the money will come from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Your Minister of Transportation said that the money will come from “everything from health care to education.” Really, Premier? That is your idea? Is that in addition to raising taxes on businesses and income earners over \$75,000?

Premier, it's clear you have no plan. As with everything else that you announced, you can't explain how you're going to pay for it. Premier, don't Ontarians deserve better than that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Transportation is going to want to speak to the supplementary, but I just want to say how thrilled I am that we are able to bring a plan—we will bring the plan forward in our budget—to invest \$29 billion in transportation infrastructure, including transit, over the next 10 years: \$15 billion in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and \$14 billion outside of Toronto.

We are very clear where the money is going to come from. We're very clear that there will be some repurposing of the gas tax and HST. We have said clearly that we want to get the most out of our assets. And we have said that there will be new revenue tools in the budget. We will bring that plan forward, and I hope that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues will support that transit plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order, and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My sympathies. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Other than your cuts to health care and education, we're still waiting for you to explain how you're going to balance your budget. We've disclosed the \$4.5-billion budget gap which you kept from the financial community. The Bank of Canada said revenues would fall, and now we've heard that your revenues are \$5 billion less. Leaked budget documents show you're

going on a \$5.7-billion spending spree. Everything you announce involves raising taxes and adding more debt.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has a plan he unveiled yesterday that makes transit and roads a priority without raising taxes. Why are you insisting on raising taxes and taking money out of health care and education when we've given you a plan to do it without raising taxes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the member opposite had listened to the whole remark that the Minister of Transportation made yesterday, he would have realized that the minister was clear that there is money that is being repurposed, but that does not mean we will be cancelling programs in education or health, unlike the party opposite. The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore basically said, in their plan, people will have to choose between full-day kindergarten and transportation infrastructure. That is a ridiculous choice. That is not a choice that we would ever put before the people of Ontario. It means that their plans to build transit are actually misguided, as well as magic.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. This morning, in the paper for all to see, is an exposé commenting on the growing trend of prescribing antipsychotic drugs to long-term-care residents. In some long-term-care homes, over half of the residents are on these drugs that are often dangerous drugs. The consequences of excessive prescribing of off-label use of antipsychotic drugs can be and have been deadly.

Can the minister explain why she has allowed this problem to balloon into crisis levels?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. There is no question that the care and safety of residents in long-term-care homes is of paramount importance. I must underline that doctors must prescribe medications appropriately and only as necessary. However, there is recognition across the long-term-care sector and within government that residents with challenging behaviours should receive non-pharmaceutical care whenever possible.

That's why we are investing in Behavioural Supports Ontario. Behavioural Supports Ontario is really showing enormous potential in the training—it encourages non-pharmaceutical interventions to address aggressive behaviour. We've hired 600 full-time staff through BSO. They're working with residents and providing real results in long-term-care homes.

I will speak more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: For years, long-term-care homes have alerted this government to this growing problem of coping with the growing numbers of seniors who suffer from dementia. They have told the ministry of the rising

use of antipsychotic drugs and that this trend was continuing. Way back in 2007, the Ontario Auditor General released a report that alerted the government to this problem, as well as issues about the lack of consent for the use of those drugs.

Can the minister explain why this problem isn't being taken more seriously by this government, as the use of antipsychotic drugs continues to rise exponentially in our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If a drug needs to be prescribed to a patient, under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, a drug cannot be given to a resident unless it has been prescribed by those who are allowed to do so under the Regulated Health Professions Act. Before a treatment can be given to a resident, consent must be given by the individual receiving the treatment. If that person is unable to give consent, then the substitute decision-maker must do so. A resident in a long-term-care home cannot be restrained by use of a drug unless immediate action is necessary to prevent serious bodily harm to themselves or others.

1110

I acknowledge that more work needs to be done on this issue, and everyone who works within the long-term-care sector agrees that more needs to be done. We are investing in Behavioural Supports Ontario to support non-pharmaceutical control of behaviours that could cause harm to residents and others.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In 2004, our government launched a transformation of Ontario's developmental services. This transformation emphasized community inclusion and increased independence for individuals.

However, many members in this House, including myself, heard from families telling us that we need to do more to support families affected by developmental disabilities. I know the minister has been a strong vocal advocate on this cause, and has spent the last year consulting to improve developmental services.

As a proud member of the Select Committee on Developmental Services, I have travelled across the province with the committee and heard from families affected by developmental disabilities. We heard from parents who urgently need respite care or residential support for their adult children as they grow older.

Last Friday, Minister, you made an exciting announcement. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please share with the House what the proposed plan for developmental services is?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to do so. I just want to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt both for her question and her own fierce advocacy on this front.

The member is absolutely correct about what we have heard from families across the province. That's why I

was proud to recently announce a bold plan. I'm delighted to share with the House this morning that our government plans to invest some \$810 million over the next three years in support of developmental services.

In total, the proposed new investment would represent the single largest infusion of support to the developmental services sector ever. This is the next step in our plan. It's about giving people with developmental challenges the tools they need to be full citizens in our society.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the minister for his answer, and also congratulate him on this milestone achievement. I know that many families from across the province appreciate his leadership and dedication to take these next steps to improve and support families affected by developmental services.

The proposed new money is a truly unprecedented commitment to developmental services in Ontario, and the magnitude of this announcement cannot be overstated. I know that families in my riding are delighted to receive this announcement. They also would like to know what the new investment would do to help support them.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please inform the House what the goals are of this investment and how this new money would be allocated?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, it has been a lot of work. I'm delighted to say that this new money will wipe out the wait-list for developmental service direct funding in the province. Over four years, it will support an additional 13,000 individuals through the Passport Program, including 4,000 new individuals we anticipate coming on stream.

It will eliminate the wait-list for Special Services at Home—just within two years—and will help 8,000 children and their families. Our plan will provide residential support for more than 1,400 new individuals, strengthening our ability to respond to people with special needs. Furthermore, more than 4,000 people would receive help to plan or make the transition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the Premier for being so supportive of this initiative, and for her ongoing encouragement, support and leadership.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, last week I rose to question why your chief of staff, Mr. Tom Teahen, failed to appear on the seconded list despite his annual salary for 2013 of over \$344,000.

Today your chief of staff is in the news once again, this time joining six other Liberal entities in allegedly violating the Election Finances Act, section 29 of which states clearly that "No political party, constituency association" or "candidate ... shall directly or indirectly ... accept contributions from any person" residing outside of Ontario.

Premier, of course I'm referring to the seven donations totalling nearly \$11,000 made by Mr. James Barry, a

resident of Quebec and the union boss for your friends the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Premier, will you direct your chief of staff to immediately return the nearly \$1,000 that was illegally donated to his own Liberal campaign in Beaches–East York?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has something to add to this, but I just want to make sure that—the rules around political donations are really important. They are a very important part of our democratic process.

Today's article was the first that I'd heard of the question raised by the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. It's my understanding that Elections Ontario has been asked to look into questions about particular donations. I understand that the individual in question has said that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Even when I eyed him and he continued—I will ask the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to come to order. This will be his last chance.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the individual involved has said that there has been a clerical error that has been made, but we will work with Elections Ontario. Of course, if they have any questions, we will absolutely work with Elections Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Premier, in 2009 your Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the past president of the Ontario Liberal Party accepted, allegedly, illegal donations from Mr. Barry, and even worse, the Liberal Party of Ontario accepted \$5,400 in illegal donations as well.

But Premier, that's not all. To reward Mr. Barry, your government appointed him to the board of governors for the Ontario College of Trades.

Premier, will you demand that all money donated from Mr. Barry be returned, including any illegal donations accepted by your chief of staff and your Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and will you take the necessary steps to remove Quebec resident Mr. Barry from the board of governors of the Ontario College of Trades?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The incorrect information in the member's question is just unbelievable.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He lives in Quebec, Brad.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, these guys will stoop—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, a complaint was made to Elections Ontario, and Elections Ontario is looking into it. The allegation appears to be that there was a clerical error made. I'm sure that whatever was done will be corrected.

But Mr. Speaker, here we go again. We have James Barry, who's the president of the IBEW. He represents 14,000 electrical workers across this province.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He lives in Quebec.

Hon. Brad Duguid: When you smear that gentleman's reputation, you smear the reputation—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North is warned.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important to people than their reputation. We're in a business where we're used to those kinds of smears coming at us. I don't think it's fair for people outside of this chamber to be—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time is up. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. After wasting a year dithering on transit, the Premier made a dozen or so announcements yesterday—so many, it's hard to take them seriously.

But one announcement stood out. She said she would fund transit by shuffling—sorry, repurposing—gas tax money. The Premier used to attack the Leader of the Opposition, and she did it again today, for threatening to fund transit by sacrificing health care and education. Remember that? But when asked last night where this gas tax money would be repurposed from, her own Minister of Transportation said, “Everything from health care to education.”

My question for the Premier is: How much will your government cut from health care and education to pay for transit?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, first—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the member for Nipissing and the member for Trinity–Spadina, who I both consider friends, would offer an apology today. The reason I think an apology is appropriate is because if you listen to the tape, what it actually says is a direct question: “What does general revenue fund?” And I said, “Everything from health care to education,” which is actually the truth.

To either friend, including my friend from Nipissing, who I consider a friend—and I'm looking him in the eye right now—who tells me he doesn't like that kind of

politic—he is now proffering that kind of politic. And if you want—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: First the government floated a scheme to privatize and toll our highways. Then they talked about raising the HST and gas taxes. Then they denied they were even in favour of tolls or the HST or gas tax increases, and instead proposed a fire sale of public assets. Now the latest plan of the week is to pay for transit by reallocating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration can hide his face. I still see it. Stop.

Carry on.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Now the latest plan of the week is to pay for transit by reallocating or repurposing money from health care and education budgets. When it comes to funding transit, the government is making it up as it goes along. We still have no idea where the money is going to come from. What services are we cutting? Which taxes are you raising? What is the government's plan?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Coming from a party whose municipal wing can't vote for a single new tax increase that they've been given, that they asked for; coming from a party that has no transportation plan for highways, transit or roads; coming from a party that can't articulate a single source of revenue to support transit—not a single source. No plan, no credible plan, no costed plan—and no apology for saying things on the record that you know are not true—tells people in Ontario a whole bunch about your character and a whole bunch about your lack of leadership.

We are quite happy to ask you one last time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —to take this historic moment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll make that decision. The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, next Tuesday, April 22, is Earth Day. Earth Day is the largest environmental event in the world. More than six million Canadians—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order. Do it again and I'll name you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: —including nearly every school-aged child, will participate in an Earth Day activity in their respective communities.

When Earth Day started in 1970, North Americans drove gas-guzzling cars that drank leaded gasoline. Belching smokestacks were then seen as a sign of a strong economy instead of an environmental shame. Since 1970, Earth Day has been a chance to raise our awareness of how this planet is the only home we'll have and focus on how we can protect it.

Would the minister explain how our government is doing its part to protect the environment here in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question. I know it was the question of the member for Leeds—Grenville, that has been stolen.

With Earth Week only a week away, I'd like to remind the House that our government has made the environment a priority again in Ontario. Ontario's elimination of coal-fired electricity generation is, as everyone knows, the single largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in North America. Federal ministers even use that in their international arguments.

Additionally, initiatives have been taken to reduce toxics in our ecosystems, to reduce waste, to protect Lake Simcoe, to clean up contamination, to protect green space and to invest in science and transportation. We've created opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and the restoration of the Great Lakes through the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund.

This government takes the health of the environment very seriously. We encourage members opposite to work with us to pass our important proposed pieces of legislation and further protect the environment for future generations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, conserving our Great Lakes' water supplies and protecting our water quality is essential to ensuring the health of our families, our communities and our economy. It's essential that Ontario provide communities with the tools to ensure that the Great Lakes will continue to supply our drinking water; power our towns and cities; irrigate our farms; enable sport fishing; and provide recreation and relaxation on the water for Ontario families and visitors.

The Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund provides many ways to help preserve and protect the Great Lakes. Would the minister please share some ways in which this is done?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to. Mr. Speaker, for all members of the House, the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund is designed to support local community actions to protect and restore wetlands, beaches, shorelines and coastal areas by offering modest grants for non-profit groups for cleanup projects. Since we launched this program two years ago, we have

awarded more than \$3 million to 156 groups to make improvements in their corner of the Great Lakes.

Here are a few examples: improving habitats for native fish, and plant more than 2,000 native trees and shrubs with the help of more than 80 community volunteers in the Ajax-Pickering area. In Burlington, I was pleased to work with 100 volunteers to improve the coastal environment of Lake Ontario's Beachway Park by planting native grasses, shrubs and trees, removing invasive species and picking up litter. Additionally, community cleanup events took place on Manitoulin Island.

The deadline for non-profit groups to seek funding for their projects is upcoming. It's May 9. I encourage all communities to seek this funding and to help clean up their portion of the Great Lakes.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Friday, the BLT—the budget-leaking team—and the minister announced \$810 million over three years to alleviate some wait-lists for developmental services.

Applause.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Clap for yourselves. Ontario invests \$1.7 billion in developmental services, a 63% increase since 2003.

Applause.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Clap again. But here's what you're applauding for: You're applauding for a decade of investment that still hasn't improved your ministry's performance.

Under Liberal reign, reliance on OW and ODSP has grown by 50% and 40%. The problems are so pervasive, especially for people with disabilities, a committee was struck to help the minister do his job.

Minister, why does your party think spending more money is the only solution when it hasn't worked for you in 10 years?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm amazed; actually, I'm almost speechless with the question. Coming from a party that, when in office, tried to balance their budget on the backs of the poor by cutting 23% from social assistance and developmental services, that didn't increase the minimum wage, that didn't increase OW or ODSP once in their tenure, that voted against every initiative this government has taken since we came to office—we don't have anything at all to learn from you over there, sir, I say.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: The minister has got to do much better than go back in time.

Minister, the truth is Comsoc is a neglected portfolio. The quintessentially Liberal cop-out to the developmental select committee is to throw more money at services to

avoid doing the hard work to actually improve them. The quintessentially Liberal response to the 2012 Lankin-Sheikh report, just like Drummond, was pretending that it didn't even happen.

Minister, the most vulnerable people in our province won't be bought and they won't be ignored. When will you respond to the Lankin-Sheikh recommendations, and undertake to actually improve service delivery for people with developmental disabilities for real?

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's all we've been doing since the Sheikh-Lankin report came out. And speaking of stakeholders, we circled back with over 280 groups to get their feedback. I want to tell you, the people the member opposite is talking about being so unhappy—that was reflected on Friday with the 600-plus emails and tweets that we received and the fact that it was trending nationally, right across this country, as being the single most important investment in the developmental services sector since we came to office in 2003. I'm proud of that.

Time doesn't stand still. The answer isn't all money. The answer is investing and ensuring that people with unique challenges have all the opportunities to fully participate in our society that so many of us take for granted. We're going to make sure that happens.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Brantford Expositor recently published a series of articles on the Ministry of Health inspections at long-term-care facilities in the Brantford area. What the newspaper found and reported is very disturbing. The Expositor has learned that long-term-care facilities in the Brantford area have not had a full inspection for almost five years, in spite of the government's promises that all homes will get this level of oversight. Does the minister think that this failure is acceptable?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have committed that all homes will have received a rigorous inspection by the end of this calendar year. We have hired, I believe, an additional 90 inspectors who have been trained and are doing that work now.

I stand by my earlier commitment that every long-term-care home in this province will have had that rigorous quality inspection by the end of this calendar year and annually thereafter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Here is what the Expositor reported on the ministry's website:

"And the revamped ministry website, which aims to 'ensure transparency and protect residents' is so difficult to navigate and evaluate, most people would find it impossible to get a true picture of problem homes.

"There's no direct way to compare one home to another, or to compare a home to a provincial average."

The ministry is not providing people with a clear report about the condition of long-term-care homes and whether or not they are meeting the legislative requirements. Minister, do you think the seniors in Brantford deserve better?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can reiterate is that we are committed to improved inspections, more rigorous inspections and results posted online. In 2003, there were 59 inspectors working in the province of Ontario. We now have 180 inspectors, with additional recruitment under way, including 90 new inspectors hired since September 2013.

Since the implementation of the Long-Term Care Homes Act there have been over 8,200 inspections conducted. I have committed, as I said earlier, that every home in this province will have that RQI by the end of this year and annually thereafter.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today my question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, you recently visited my wonderful riding of Vaughan with the Premier to attend a seniors round table. We hosted more than 600 seniors at this particular event who came from over 100 different seniors groups. I want to take a quick moment to pay tribute to Mario Ferri, Tony Porretta and the rest of the organizing subcommittee that worked so hard to pull this together.

This particular round table provided the seniors from my community with the opportunity to hear presentations that discussed a variety of topics that are important to them and their families. I'm still receiving phone calls from constituents praising this event and telling me that they can't wait for another healthy seniors round table to take place in Vaughan.

At this event, the minister discussed the issue of social isolation felt by many seniors across the province. Can the minister please elaborate on some of the ways in which our government is addressing this important issue?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Indeed, it was a very impressive sight to see some 600 or more seniors, and I have to say congratulations to the member from Vaughan, because he did work very hard in bringing the seniors there. What's more impressive is that the seniors came very well engaged, and they were ready with their many questions, from pensions to realty taxes.

I have to say, in answering the question of the member, that Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors is the framework within which we have a number of other plans to serve our seniors.

The last one: It's wonderful, and I'm so elated to say that it has been received extremely well by our seniors' organizations: the Seniors Community Grant Program. It's so successful that we are continuing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the minister, not only for his response and not only for being in Vaughan a couple of Fridays ago for this round table, but for his exemplary work on behalf of seniors right across the province of Ontario.

Minister, during your remarks at this particular round table event, you provided attendees with an update regarding the implementation and the protections offered under the Retirement Homes Act. For the first time in Ontario, seniors living in retirement homes have strong protections under this act.

Can the minister please inform the House on the status of the risk officer and complaints review officer? These are two very important accountability and transparency provisions in the act that help to further a resident's protections.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Indeed, Speaker, it is comforting to know that the Retirement Homes Act offers our seniors in retirement homes very strong protection under our provincial law. With the beginning of the year, we moved into phase 5 of the Retirement Homes Act. We now have in place the risk officer assessing the effectiveness of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, including care and safety standards and residents' rights. The risk officer and the complaints review officer prepare public reports and statements, and residents now have access to the complaints resolution process as well.

The risk officer and the complaints review officer provide accountability and transparency, and furthermore, they provide more protection for our seniors to live in retirement homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to introduce Elliott Silverstein from CAA, Peter Karageorgos from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and Dara Carpenter from Intact Insurance, who are here today to witness the tabling of our towing legislation. As well, I would like to welcome Ministry of Transportation staff on behalf of Minister Murray: Robert Bonofiglio, Dawn Stevely and Joanne Gort, here to witness the introduction of the legislation as well. Thanks for being here.

SPECIAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I move to members' statements, I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a special investigation report from the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario entitled *Crossing the Line: The Indiscriminate Disclosure of Attempted Suicide Information to US Border Officials via CPIC*.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: In March, I had the pleasure to join the Huron Federation of Agriculture and the Bruce Federation of Agriculture on their annual Meet the Members Day, along with my federal counterpart, MP Ben Lobb, and municipal representatives as well.

These annual events provide a forum for agricultural leaders across my riding of Huron–Bruce to meet with elected officials to discuss the pressing issues that are impacting agriculture and food locally and across the province.

Speaker, you won't be surprised to hear that the price of electricity was at the top of the list of concerns, as it is in all sectors of Ontario's economy, from manufacturing to retail. Ontario's agri-food sector can be very power-intensive, and the cost of electricity is a serious problem.

Furthermore, like the rest of Ontario's manufacturing sector, food processing and ag inputs have been hit particularly hard in recent years.

I have to note that the impact of red tape was also cited as a priority, as it hampers productivity and holds back growth. In fact, one commodity representative noted that his farming business must interact with nine different Ontario ministries, many in a redundant manner.

Finally, the recent angst generated by the uncertain future of Kemptville college has led to concern amongst the agricultural community. It was noted that currently there are three jobs waiting for every graduate of an agricultural college. If campuses keep closing, fewer graduates will lead to major labour shortages in the industry.

We need jobs in Ontario, and we support Tim Hudak.

ORAL HEALTH

Mr. Michael Prue: April is Oral Health Month here in the province in Ontario. On April 4, I had the good fortune of going to Brush-a-mania at Crescent Town school. What a wonderful time that was, with hundreds of kids there, all learning of the importance of brushing your teeth. I was joined by Dr. Rick Caldwell, the ODA president; by Dr. Raffy Chouljian and Dr. Andrew Syriopoulos; and, of course, by the Rotary Club of East York. The guest of honour was a guy dressed up as Timmy the Tooth, who was walking around, and the kids were absolutely fascinated.

For me, the most important was having five children about six or seven years old, all lined up in a row, dressed up in teeth costumes. Everybody in the whole room—100 kids—was brushing their teeth. They were having a great time.

The East York Mirror came and immortalized at least two of the kids standing there with toothbrushes in their mouths, dressed as a tooth. It appeared on the front page of the East York Mirror this past week, so that all of the kids, not only in the school but across East York, could see the importance and the message of oral health. It was

important to let them know that teeth need to last a lifetime.

Another thing that happened after that is, I had an opportunity to meet with some of the parents, who were in a room downstairs. The parents, many of them new immigrants, were learning about health care facilities available to them here in Toronto and in Ontario, and they were very, very happy that we were putting the message to their children about the importance of oral health.

HOSPICE AT MAY COURT

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Hospice at May Court for the care and respect they gave to my father and our family over the last three weeks of his life.

To Doctors Mai, Riley and Tucker, thank you for your advice and for giving us a clear understanding of what to expect, and for ensuring that Dad was comfortable in his last days.

To all the nurses and personal support workers, thank you for the gentle and loving care you gave us. You laughed with us and, most importantly, you were always interested and engaging with Dad, qualities that were important to him throughout his life.

To the volunteers, thank you for your kind words and deeds.

To all the staff and volunteers, you should know that you give expression daily to what our community hopes for our loved ones and our families at a very important time: peace, dignity, respect, love. If there are rest stations between heaven and earth, the Hospice at May Court is certainly one of them.

SOUTH GLENGARRY BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr. Jim McDonell: In this great province of ours, we all know people who have gone beyond what we generally expect, to make a real difference. It may be in the business they started or operate today, in the dividends it returns to the community or the people who have given hours and hours of their limited time back to the community.

At this time I wish to take the opportunity to recognize some of the residents of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who, through their hard work, business initiative and spirit of service to their peers have made a huge difference in our community.

At the ninth annual South Glengarry Business and Community Awards, the people of South Glengarry chose to recognize the following dedicated and deserving citizens for their contributions to the township:

The Youth Merit Award went to Kathleen McDougald. The Community Service Award was given to Chelsea Hope. Scott Fournay of Fournayview Farms received the Excellence in Agriculture Award. Cruickshank construction was recognized as Business of the

Year. Dimitrios and Colette Kritikos of Dimitri's restaurant received the Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

A certificate of appreciation was also awarded to Todd Rozon, Bruce Munro, Tish Humphries, Rick Marvel and Micheline Carter for their successful fundraising canvass for the Cornwall Community Hospital.

The South Glengarry Citizen of the Year Award went to Sylvia Thomson, a recognized long-term volunteer in many local groups, including Martintown Women's Institute, the Martintown Community Centre and the Martintown mill restoration group, and she was a founding member of the Martintown Horticultural Society. For many years now, the flower arrangements spread around the village and on the bridge surrounding the village signs have been her doing and the envy of the township.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the recipients for their contributions in making our lives just a little bit better. Thank you.

SEED YOUR STARTUP

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm proud to rise as MPP for London West to recognize the winners of the third annual Seed Your Startup competition, held in London on April 9, 2014. The competition was organized by BizInc, a student incubator launched three years ago to seek out, support and promote student entrepreneurs at Fanshawe College and Western university. Seed Your Startup provides seed funding to student projects to help young entrepreneurs grow their business over the summer.

This year, over 40 business proposals were submitted, with the top five projects in two categories invited to pitch their ideas to a panel of London-area judges. Prizes worth over \$10,000 in cash and services were donated by local sponsors.

The Best New Operating Business Award, worth \$7,000 in cash and services, was won by Megan Kraft from Western and Daniel Phillips from Fanshawe for dpms, a socially conscious, high-quality and locally made lifestyle brand.

A second prize of \$3,000 in cash and services was awarded to Western student Jessica Hodgson for Kaleid Snow Gear, maker of snowboard shin guards.

Seed Your Startup shows the important work that is being done for my constituents by BizInc to help students build a business and create their own careers. In just three years, BizInc has worked with 390 entrepreneurial teams from Western and Fanshawe. In turn, 70 new operating companies have been created, employing more than 130 young entrepreneurs and contributing more than \$2 million to our regional economy.

Helping students start businesses in London makes good economic sense, and BizInc is where it all begins.

1510

WHAT'S UP WALK-IN CLINIC

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm honoured to rise today to talk about an event I had the pleasure of attending in my

riding of Scarborough-Guildwood during victims' awareness week: The opening of What's Up Walk-in Clinic at 181 Galloway Road, an initiative by the Bereaved Families of Ontario and East Metro Youth Services to help youth find a safe space in which to explore grief and to reduce the isolation of youth who are dealing with loss.

On October 31, 2013, Bereaved Families of Ontario was approved for an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$66,300 over 24 months to modify and expand the peer-led grief support program for youth in priority neighbourhoods across the city. BFO and East Metro Youth Services have partnered in Scarborough-Guildwood to provide bereavement support services to youth grieving a homicide or death due to natural causes.

The official launch of the program was held on Friday, April 11, and it was brought forward with the support of Lesley Parrott, who shared her journey, really, of moving to a place of joy and healing after the untimely murder and rape of her daughter, Alison. Three other mothers and women shared their stories as well, as they planted a tree as a symbol of their hope and healing.

This service is an effective support for our young people to help them overcome a tremendous loss.

I want to thank Aruna Ogale, executive director of Bereaved Families of Ontario, and Claire Fainer, executive director of East Metro, for their foresight on this initiative.

LIFE-SAVING SKILLS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to recognize four real-life heroes who made the biggest save of the Brockville Gentleman's Hockey League season. Their save had nothing to do with keeping the puck out of the net, but it did involve incredible teamwork. The heroic actions of Kim Hansen, Bob Wheeler, Al Perry and Chris Robertson saved Dan Doyle's life after he collapsed to the ice, lifeless, last month.

Fortunately, the Brockville Memorial Centre, where the game was played, is equipped with a public access defibrillation unit, or PAD. Acting immediately and working as a team, Hansen, Wheeler, Perry and Robertson gave Doyle the two defibrillator shocks that saved his life.

As Hansen, a dentist from Prescott—who I understand has been involved in two previous life-saving incidents—told a Brockville newspaper, "He was gone. We brought him back." Amazingly, Doyle was conscious and talking when Brockville firefighters and Leeds-Grenville emergency services paramedics arrived and got him to hospital.

It's fitting these four heroes are being honoured on First Responders Day, May 1, at the St. John Ambulance Brigade of Leeds-Grenville and Lanark's Canadian Heroes event. This recognition is important, and I join all of Leeds-Grenville in commending them.

This event has also increased awareness about how life-saving skills can make the difference in an emergency.

Indeed, St. John Ambulance has received many inquiries about CPR training and requests for PADs.

What a great legacy to know that Dan Doyle won't be the only person who gets to keep playing, thanks to these heroes.

PAPER BILL CHARGES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, for years, all of us have been getting bills from our local phone companies and our local cable companies on paper with no extra charge, but I'm sure lately many of us might have noticed that for a paper bill, these companies can charge anywhere between \$2 and \$4, and they've given two reasons when you go to their websites or talk to them.

One, they say it's environmentally better to send it electronically, and I happen to agree with them. But in that case, my only question to them is, why do they keep mailing all of us paper flyers advertising their services if they're so concerned about the environment? The other thing that they go on to say—in fact, one of them said, “It is so convenient you can print your own bills.” There goes the whole argument around the environment.

Their second argument is usually around the fact that, “It's cheaper for us to send an electronic bill.” Well, in that case, pass on the savings. If it's cheaper for you to send me an electronic bill, if I sign up online, give me the discount, because the cost of mailing hasn't gone up that much. You've been mailing those bills for free forever. Now, if you've found a cheaper way, pass on the savings; don't penalize and charge extra for the old system.

Particularly, my main concern is around fairness. I don't think it's fair to seniors, to the disadvantaged or even those who may not be very familiar with electronics. So I'm going to be introducing a private member's bill to ban these fees, and I just wanted to make a statement.

BURLINGTON BUSINESS COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: On Thursday evening, I had the pleasure of attending the Burlington Chamber of Commerce's Business Awards Gala. Every year, this fantastic evening showcases the very best of our city's business community, and 2014 was no exception, Speaker.

In addition to the chamber's Business Excellence Awards, the gala also featured the presentation of the Burlington Economic Development Corporation Business Exports Award and community service awards. Nominations are based on overall business excellence, and the criteria includes excellence in business leadership, community contributions, entrepreneurship, environment, employee welfare, innovation, and market growth.

Seventeen local organizations across the spectrum of categories were named as award finalists. Some of the notables included: EcoSynthetix in the manufacturing category; Nickel Brook Brewery in the retail/wholesale

category; and Burlington Youth Soccer Club and Cogeco Cable Canada in the small and large service categories respectively. Deloitte was named employer of the year. Up-and-comer David Lammers took home the Young Entrepreneur Award, and Anaergia was awarded the BEDC Business Export Award.

Finally, community service awards went to Smith's Funeral Home in the business category and to Halton Women's Place in the not-for-profit category.

Congratulations to all nominees and everyone who dedicates themselves to make Burlington a great place to do business.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE PROTECTION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DES USAGERS DE L'ASSISTANCE ROUTIÈRE

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 189, An Act to amend various acts with respect to tow and storage service, the enhancement of consumer protection, commercial motor vehicle and tow truck regulation, and the enforcement of legislation / *Projet de loi 189, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les services de remorquage et d'entreposage, l'amélioration de la protection du consommateur, la réglementation des véhicules utilitaires et des dépanneuses et l'exécution de la législation.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

AUDITOR GENERAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act / *Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur général.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: This bill would amend the Auditor General Act, and it would allow the Auditor General to

conduct special audits of public contractors. A public contractor includes any body or entity that delivers programs or services on behalf of the crown and that receives payment or financial assistance from the crown or another entity, or is empowered by the crown to collect fees for its services.

Mr. Speaker, it's my feeling this will help the Auditor General to do her job more effectively.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOWING AND VEHICLE STORAGE

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is a great privilege to rise in the House today to tell you about the steps our government is proposing to take to regulate the towing and vehicle storage industries for over nine million drivers in Ontario. The Ministry of Consumer Services has been working very closely with our colleagues in two other ministries—the Ministry of Finance, under the leadership of Minister Sousa, and the Ministry of Transportation, under the leadership of Minister Murray—to develop the changes to the current laws governing these industries, which are before you today.

Proposing to regulate towing and vehicle storage is, in fact, a three-part fulfillment of a larger commitment that our government made to the people of Ontario. If these legislative changes are passed, they would help strengthen consumer protection, improve road safety, and reduce automobile insurance fraud.

My ministry's work on towing is part of our comprehensive efforts to strengthen protection for consumers in this province. I have spoken in this House many times about the changes we've made to areas such as door-to-door sales, debt settlement companies, and real estate transactions, as well as wireless and cellphone contracts.

As a way of empowering consumers to ask the right questions about their rights, we've recently launched our Consumer Protection Ontario initiative through ads on television, in movie theatres and online.

To begin our discussion today on towing and vehicle storage, I'd like to outline some of the concerns surrounding these industries and, to be frank, some of the significant problems that exist. There are approximately 1,200 tow truck and vehicle storage operators in Ontario, and about 3,000 tow truck drivers. Most of them provide good service to their customers and contribute to keeping our roads free and clear by removing vehicles, including those involved in collisions, quickly and efficiently.

But we've all heard in the media that some of them simply do not meet the standards expected of them. A number of serious concerns have also been raised about the industry by consumers and the Insurance Bureau of Canada. We know, for example, that some tow truck drivers charge exorbitant rates, leaving vulnerable accident victims feeling surprised and distressed.

We're also aware of other dubious tactics used by some operators. Some people have reported being faced with demands for hundreds of dollars in cash at the scene of an accident before the service is even provided. Others have reported having their vehicles towed to far-off storage facilities to increase mileage, thus raising prices for consumers.

Many of us have heard stories of people going to pick up their vehicle from vehicle storage lots, only to find they've been asked to pay unexpectedly large amounts before their vehicles are released.

Last month, our government introduced Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, which, if passed, would allow government to set regulations to define "fair value" for storage and set reasonable notice periods for the storage of the vehicles.

It's worth noting that from a road safety perspective, tow truck drivers, unfortunately, also have a very high collision rate, caused in part by aggressive driving when trying to get to collision scenes first. According to the Ontario Road Safety Annual Report, tow truck drivers in Ontario had a 19.7% collision rate in 2010. This is compared to only 1.1% for other commercial vehicles and 3.3% for private passenger vehicles.

There have also been allegations that some tow truck drivers contribute to the inflation of auto insurance claims by steering claimants to particular storage providers and auto body repair shops. I know that many of you can share similar stories; ones that you, your family or friends have experienced first-hand. These are the kind of unfortunate situations we are trying to eliminate from the province.

From the consumer protection side, these changes would amend the Consumer Protection Act, the act that forms the basis for many consumer rights here in Ontario. The amendments would establish towing- and vehicle storage-specific consumer protections and give the government stronger enforcement powers. New rules would require towing and storage providers to do the following: first, publish their rates; second, provide an itemized invoice; third, accept payment by credit card if requested; disclose to the consumer any interest a towing and storage provider may have in a location or facility to which a vehicle may be towed for repair or storage; and give the consumer access to his or her towed vehicle to remove personal property.

I want to stress that the legislative changes we're proposing here have been developed through a great deal of consultation. They have the support of most of the 17 municipalities in Ontario that already license tow truck operators, and they are the result of recommendations we have received from a group of stakeholders who make up our towing advisory group, with representatives from the towing and insurance industries, consumer advocate groups, automobile clubs, the vehicle financing and leasing industry, Ontario municipalities and, last but not least, police services. This group provided us with advice and input on a wide range of issues related to the towing industry.

We have a second advisory group, Speaker, on storage, which includes stakeholders from the vehicle storage industry, and they have given us advice specifically on the sector.

Again, I want to stress that we've developed this new legislation in consultation with people who live and breathe towing and vehicle storage in this province.

From the perspective of road safety and building on the great work Minister Murray has been doing, these legislative changes would amend the Highway Traffic Act to remove the current exemption for tow trucks under MTO's commercial vehicle operator's registration system, also known as the CVOR system.

In addition, the new legislation would allow us to set qualifications and standards governing the operation and use of tow trucks, including driver certification and training requirements, and prescribe penalties to violators.

What we are proposing here today is a first step to regulating the towing and vehicle storage industries in Ontario. We'll continue to work with all parties involved to explore the best way forward, including working with municipalities—in particular, those who have already taken action to license towing in their jurisdictions—to learn from their experiences and, of course, to reduce any potential duplication.

Our goal for this is that the municipal systems that do exist can work in tandem, or that those municipalities that are regulating tow trucks and no longer wish to do that can move to a provincial system.

To sum up, our proposed legislation would, if passed, have three major impacts, Speaker. It would support consumers being treated in a fair manner by towing and vehicle storage providers; second, it would make the province's roads safer for Ontario's nine million licensed drivers; and third, it would support greater integrity in the auto insurance claims process involving these industries.

The bottom line is this: In Ontario, we want drivers involved in traffic collisions or in need of roadside assistance to have confidence that the tow truck driver helping them is reputable and will work safely and provide honest and fair dealings, and we are committed to working with the towing and vehicle storage industries in Ontario to make that happen, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Many of us do have experiences with the towing industry, and mine have been positive down in Haldimand-Norfolk. We've got local companies and garages that help out with understanding and honesty, and their reputation is evident. The same goes for CAA. I've been a long-standing member, and I value their service.

However, I do recall an incident a number of years ago with my—I used to own a 1963 Plymouth Slant-6. It got towed off a Toronto street. I finally got around to tracking it down, and after hearing about the storage charge and the parking ticket, I decided to walk away. We have an expression down our way: Never drive a car you can't afford to walk away from.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Several times. I know there was a bit of a confrontation in the yard, because I wasn't going to pay for it, but I did want to get my tools out of the trunk.

1530

In some quarters, it has gotten much worse, as we've just heard. We read the media reports of the pirates out on the 401 and the QEW through the GTA. So we know there are good guys and there are bad guys.

Back in November, Peter Cheney wrote a *Globe and Mail* article about some of the horror stories. The headline: "Pirates on the Highway Are Costing Ontario Drivers Billions." Mr. Cheney describes how tow truck drivers, as we know, dial in to police frequencies and they wait. We've all seen the truck and driver waiting on the ramps. The article reports that a day's pay can range from \$150 to five figures. Apparently, according to the article, tow truck drivers can make up to \$10,000 in one call, as they work the system. According to the writer, there's an ugly roadside game, with padded bills and under-the-table payments from paralegals, rehab clinics and body shops.

There are reputable tow truck drivers out there; I know many of them. However, a crash or a breakdown, for example on the 401, can go either way. If lucky, a motorist gets fair treatment, reasonable rates and good service, or they can find themselves—and I quote the article—"plunged into a netherworld of extortionate fees, kickback-laden referrals and barbed-wire impound lots where their car is held hostage until the bill is paid."

He continues: "Running through the heart of the country's biggest city, Highway 401 is the Grand Banks of towing—and sometimes, its Somali coast. According to a provincial task force that investigated insurance fraud, unscrupulous tow truck operators are at the front line of a black-market enterprise that costs Ontario drivers \$2 billion each year." The task force found that this type of fraud adds up to about \$700 on every GTA insurance bill.

As I said, there are many good tow truck drivers—the CAA; I think of Misner's down my way; Queensway Garage; and Shortt's Garage, just to name a few.

When I hear about another issue, vehicle storage scams—again, I can't help but wonder whether this legislation we're talking about today—yesterday, I was debating Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens. Today we're debating this newly introduced Roadside Assistance Protection Act, again with respect to storage. I trust there's no duplication here. I hope there isn't.

The Bill 171 amendment to the Repair and Storage Liens Act was designed to stop fraudsters from charging exorbitant storage rates. My question: To what extent does this new bill try and do the same thing?

Some storage facilities begin to charge the owner of the vehicle immediately, and the problem is, the owner may not know that. Current legislation allows the facility to hold the vehicle for 60 days. The revenues build up before they're notified.

Speaker, I hope this initiative is done as efficiently as possible. We don't need more red tape or paper-pushing

for the industry, and we don't need to punish everyone for a few bad apples.

Our fear is unnecessary red tape and overregulation. As was mentioned, when it comes to certification and training for owners, operators and drivers, not everyone needs that kind of training. Not everyone is on the 401. The last thing we need is a repeat of the College of Trades.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to rise today and speak on behalf of my NDP colleagues regarding the Roadside Assistance Protection Act and the introduction of it. It's nice to see people here from the CAA. I've been a proud CAA member my whole driving life.

Now that I'm a northern member, I drive down the 400 and the 401 a lot, and I see lots of tow trucks. There are not too many tow trucks in northern Ontario around Highway 11, but when you get to the 400 and 401, there are lots of them.

I've had a bad experience with a tow truck driver myself, and I think it's a good thing that we're discussing this. We are all afraid of overregulation, but regulation has a place. The people who are doing a good job usually aren't afraid of regulation, because regulation protects the people who are playing by the rules, the people who are out to serve others.

On behalf of our caucus, we're looking forward to debating this bill and seeing what it brings.

ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would like to take this opportunity to make a formal announcement to the House that I will be tabling the 2014 budget on Thursday, May 1 at 4 p.m.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Bani.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition and I will give my petition to page Calvin.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels and access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life;

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost

makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families."

I certainly agree with this petition and I will sign it.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes to me from Mr. and Mrs. Carrier from White Road in Lively in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask page Caroline to bring it to the Clerk.

1540

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I agree with this petition, I'm affixing my signature and giving it page Megan.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

Mr. Speaker, I concur with this petition and will affix my name to it.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree, affix my signature and give it to page Isabella.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: I am pleased to present this to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of residents in Prince Edward-Hastings:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the

Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this and will send to the table with Mustfah.

SHALE BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mr. Barry Cripps of Collingwood for sending me this petition—actually a whole batch of petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation closed public access to Shale Beach off Highway 26 in the town of Blue Mountains suddenly and with no consultation; and

"Whereas the closure will impact fishermen, swimmers and visitors who have been frequenting the beach for generations with no problem; and

"Whereas the closure will remove one of the only wheelchair-accessible fishing locations in the area; and

"Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government won't let Ontarians enjoy anything for free anymore without implementing a new tax or a new fee;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows"—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm glad you're finally paying attention; it's a serious issue in my riding.

"That Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Transportation immediately restore access to Shale Beach so that residents can continue to enjoy the beach and all that it has to offer for generations to come."

Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to introduce yet another petition from my riding addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies;...

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method;...

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with this and send it over with the page.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Isabella.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels. For a CF patient with the specific G551D mutation, access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families as it is to those in several countries including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom."

I'm pleased to sign this and will send it to the table.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

1550

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I couldn't agree with this more and I will affix my name to it.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Anthony.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's my understanding that the last time we debated Bill 165, the member for Northumberland–Quinte West had the floor and completed his remarks, so we now go to questions and comments with respect to his speech. Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm actually looking forward to this debate this afternoon to speak on Bill 165. Unfortunately, I wasn't here in the House to hear the member from Northumberland–Quinte West's comments, but I do want to express how important this issue is and that I'm glad to see that we are going to have a good thrust of the debate on this issue. As the NDP members, we have some great suggestions that we hope this government will be listening to and perhaps adopt, because they've adopted a lot of other ideas in the past that we have brought forward.

In my riding of London–Fanshawe, my community has, of course, one of the higher unemployment rates in Ontario. We need good jobs brought to Ontario, not just temporary, precarious jobs. We need full-time, good-paying jobs with benefits, with retirement plans so that when people have worked for 20 or 30 years, they can rest assured that at the end of their career, at the end of their choice of occupation, they're going to have some stability in their retirement, they're going to be able to afford their home, put food on the table and pay their expensive hydro bills that this government, unfortunate-

ly, has had a role to play in, as well as the Conservatives by privatizing our energy system.

Again, I look forward to hearing the debate today. I will be speaking for 10 minutes on this bill later on. I look forward to hearing the summary wrap-up from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to respond to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. As the previous speaker noted, I can't remember what he said, but I have a feeling that I know what he said.

What I've heard from people around the province of Ontario on this issue is they want it to be fair, they want the minimum wage to be balanced, and they want it to be predictable. We're increasing minimum wage to \$11 on June 1. That means that Ontario once again will have the highest minimum wage in all of Canada. The 75-cent increase accounts for inflation, since we had the last increase in March 2010.

The minimum wage will be revised annually, if this bill passes, by a percentage equal to the percentage change in the Ontario consumer price index, which most people think is fair. It allows businesses to plan ahead, and it also allows those who are earning at this level to know that their earnings will keep up at least with the pace of inflation as it moves forward. This would put in place a full review of the process determining how the minimum wage is set every five years.

Speaker, we've had a lot of debate on this. I think Ontarians are ready to see this pass. I think that a number of individuals in this House are ready to see it pass. I'd ask that the members allow this to move on to committee. If there are improvements to be made to the bill, they can be made at that time; then return it to the House for full passage. That's what it deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to congratulate our PC member from Northumberland–Quinte West, who did a great job here in the House talking about this bill. Of course, the PC caucus, as I indicated to the former labour critic, will be supporting tying the minimum wage increases to inflation. Of course, we should give a shout-out to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and their members across the province who have really put a lot of time into this issue. They gave, I think, a very balanced report to the Minister of Labour a while ago on this.

Of course, when I did the one-hour lead on this bill, I gave our party's position and really highlighted to the former minister, and I'd reiterate today to the current minister, that we need to get on with the plan of creating well-paying jobs in the province of Ontario.

I know the member from London–Fanshawe mentioned about her riding being hard hit when it comes to the number of people unemployed. Of course, I represent a riding in southwestern Ontario where we've lost tens

and thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector. One interesting statistic is that in the last eight years, London has lost one third of all their manufacturing jobs. I think that's a really frightening statistic.

I'm afraid that the Liberal government is a little tired, spending a lot of their time, I guess, hiring lawyers and slapping people in the House with lawsuits. I think they need to get on with the job of creating private sector jobs in the province of Ontario.

Just before I close, a report came out from the Fraser Institute yesterday saying that Ontario is only creating 4% of private sector jobs, where the rest of the provinces are doing a lot better than Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. Obviously, we would have liked to have seen it raised higher; we've suggested 50 cents in 2015 and 50 cents in 2016. They may be smiling over there that we do want to raise it higher. We had a suggestion, which has fallen on deaf ears, that we lower the small business tax: a reduction from 4.5% to 4% on June 1 to accompany that so it doesn't have a negative impact on small business, from 4% to 3.5% on June 1, 2015, and from 3.5% to 3% on June 1, 2016.

What that does—it doesn't put a burden on the small business, the mom-and-pop shops. They certainly can counter the increase to the minimum wage with these reductions in their small business tax. And we can certainly look at other exemptions for small business.

The number \$14 was floating around. That's quite an increase, and we certainly want to work towards that goal as quickly as we can, because what we call it is a livable wage. What the government and the official opposition don't realize is that a livable wage means that you can pay your bills and don't have to go on the system for help. You can pay for your own food. You might even be able to get a job that's reasonable, that will get you by. It's a livable wage. They don't get it; they don't get it. We get it and we're trying to move in a direction that we can get to that point where a lot of Ontarians who are suffering and can't pay their hydro bill—that's another story for another day; it's off the map.

Don't forget that when these people go to a grocery store—if you're making \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, the guy who is making \$25,000 or \$30,000 is paying the same price for that loaf of bread, the same for milk, the same hydro bills and everything else. He can't compete and he ends up losing his house and is out on the street—especially people on fixed income. It's unacceptable. They've got to move in a faster direction towards raising the minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our time for questions and comments.

We return to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for his reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say I'm a little taken aback that the

members don't recall my stirring and emotional speech from over a week ago. You've seen the movie *Braveheart*, when Mel Gibson is running around? It was almost that stirring.

1600

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Yes, you can't take away our freedom.

I want to thank the members for their comments. On a more serious note, this is a very serious bill: Bill 165.

Studies have shown—and I hear it in my communities from small businesses, particularly in the service industry—that this 75-cent-an-hour raise is going to have a huge impact on their bottom line. I've already heard from numerous restaurants and small businesses that they're actually going to have to lay off some of their part-time workers or shift from full-time employees to part-time employees, so it's going to have a devastating impact.

More to the point, this minimum wage bill, Bill 165, is going to have an insignificant impact compared to what the Liberals are proposing with their Ontario Pension Plan, the OPP. This Ontario Pension Plan is going to take upwards of \$45 a week out of the pockets of each and every employed citizen in the province. That's \$45 a week.

If an individual was working for minimum wage, that 75-cent increase equates to a \$30-a-week pay increase, but they'll have to contribute to their Ontario Pension Plan, which is going to cost \$45, so they're actually losing \$15 a week out of pocket.

Again, Liberal economics don't make sense. The OPP is going to kill this province, as well as Bill 165.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for recognizing me and giving me a chance to speak about Bill 165. We've had a lot of discussion on this topic, and I'm glad to be able to express my opinion on it as well.

The riding of Niagara Falls has seen a lot of good-paying jobs pick up and leave over the last number of years, and many people in our community lost good-paying jobs and are now working for minimum wage.

Not too long ago, I was out in one of the coldest winters we've seen in a while, knocking on doors and talking to people. I've got to tell you: It was clear that people were deeply concerned about their jobs and how they were going to pay their bills. They weren't just worried about making ends meet for themselves, but about what kind of future there would be for their kids and grandkids. They didn't want to see young people in the community leave to go someplace else. They wanted them to have a chance to stay in their own communities to work, play and raise their children, in Niagara.

Minimum wage jobs aren't just for kids looking for summer work anymore. Between 2004 and 2012, we've seen the number of minimum wage workers who are age 35 and over increase from 17% to 27%, including many seniors. It was clear when I was knocking on doors that it

is an issue that affects everyone, and we need to take serious action to ensure that people aren't being forced into poverty. Low-wage jobs affect us all. Jobs across many industries have wages near the bottom end of the pay scale, jobs such as bank tellers, security guards, child care workers, personal home support workers, teacher assistants and flight attendants.

In fact, increasing people's minimum wage helps more than just their pocketbook; it helps them lead healthier lives. People working for wages below the poverty line are more likely to have more long-term health issues like diabetes, heart disease and migraines, compared to those with a decent wage. Low-wage workers also have much lower rates of insurance coverage, vision care, dental care, prescription and hospital care services, leaving them and their families in a generally poor state of health. It's difficult to get access to healthy food because of these low wages, which also contribute to poor health.

Just this morning I was talking about Bill 162, on ways to help people eat healthier. We see an increasing number of working Ontarians relying on food banks to get by. We've seen years of prices on just about everything going up and up and up on things like their hydro bills, their gas bills and their auto insurance. At the same time, we've seen years of this government failing to take a lead on helping everyday families with easing the cost of living.

It's really no surprise to me that when their announcement to raise the minimum wage came, it happened during the middle of a by-election. An important issue like minimum wage should never be announced during a by-election. It's something we've seen before, and I bet we'll see it again. The sad part is that even when you make this kind of announcement, it simply doesn't go far enough in helping the average Ontarian. People are finding themselves squeezed at every turn, and the choices they're having to make aren't getting any easier. Just recently, I received an email from a young lady in my riding asking for help. She was facing hydro bills that just keep climbing, and that is coming on top of all kinds of other increases. Just last month, she got hit with a home hydro bill of over \$450. She took the time to go back through her bills and found that her hydro bill had gone up an average of \$100 a month.

There's lots I can say about hydro rates, and I'm sure I'll be saying it sometime soon, but we need to make sure that people can afford to keep the lights on; that people can afford to heat their homes; that people can afford to buy their groceries and not have to choose between paying rent and paying to heat their homes.

The increase on the cost of living that this bill talks about won't come anywhere near the increase my constituents face on their hydro and gas bills. It's not enough, and New Democrats have put forward a smart, practical way of increasing the minimum wage. We can do better for the people of this province, for the people of Niagara. I don't think we need to settle for the current plan. We can make people's lives easier by: raising the minimum wage by 50 cents in 2015 to \$11.50; a further

50 cents in 2016 to \$12; and tie the minimum wage to inflation while giving employers four months' notice before any additional increases.

We need to set these increases in a smart and clear way. I come from Niagara Falls, one of the biggest tourist destinations in the world, and the businesses in my riding know all about busy and slow seasons. It's one of the hardest things for many of the small businesses in my riding.

The Falls are definitely beautiful in the winter. I saw a lot of Liberal and Conservative members in the Niagara Falls riding during my election. They never called me for a tour of the Falls, though. They missed out because when the Falls are frozen over, it's beautiful. So, hopefully, when the Liberals and Conservatives came to our riding, they took the opportunity to see the Falls. It was one of the first times it was ever frozen over, so I certainly hope that you did that. But we get way more people coming to the Falls in the summer. This winter was especially tough, since it lasted for so long, even snowing today. I know; I was out in it. It seemed like it was still going on.

Without knowing when they can expect to see more people coming to town, businesses hold off on hiring more staff. I've listened to the owners and the operators of these businesses, and I know they need a clear timeline to be able to plan for changes and not have them forced on them all at once. That's why increasing the minimum wage gradually and consistently is the best way to go. We've listened to their concerns, and that's why we're proposing a gradual increase over the next two years and at the same time helping out small businesses on their taxes to offset the minimum wage increases gradually. It makes the most sense. They'll be able to know what is coming, when, and make their plans as a result.

The Liberals and Conservatives want to keep lowering the corporate tax rate for big companies. We've seen that time and time again. They don't reinvest their money back into our communities. We know that these big companies are sitting on nearly \$500 billion. There's no reason we should let that happen. That's money that isn't being reinvested back in our communities, our hospitals, our infrastructure or in giving the workers higher wages.

1610

In 2012, almost half the minimum wage earners in this province were working for companies with over 500 employees. It's companies like Pizza Pizza, who increased their profits by 37% last year, and they don't need more giveaways. They need to invest in their employees in the form of better wages and benefits.

The other week I was in Fort Erie and I had breakfast at a new restaurant called Breakfast Café that recently opened up. I was speaking to the owner about the difficulties of opening a new business, and she told me that the only reason she could open was because of the jobs that would stay in her community because they fought to keep the racetrack open.

Although the Fort Erie racetrack is open, we still have a number of issues to work on at the track. The people

working at the track aren't corporate CEOs, but local people working hard to make ends meet. When they can, they take their hard-earned dollars out into the community and they spend it at other local places like the restaurant I was eating at. When people can afford to pay their bills and set aside a little something for themselves, it helps the local economy.

Increasing the minimum wage can help bring workers out of poverty. Our plan to bring the minimum wage to \$12 an hour is closer to the low-income cut-off than the current \$11 minimum wage.

Speaker, we can move forward on raising the standard of living for thousands of Ontarians across this province and, at the same time, help the small businesses that are the cornerstone of our economy. We know it's not going to hurt job creation. Ontario increased the minimum wage from \$7.75 to \$10.25, and we saw almost 150,000 jobs added.

In addition, Ontario needs to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Do you want to finish the sentence?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm good. I'm finished.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All right. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his comments.

We've had over nine hours of debate so far, and 40 speakers have talked on Bill 165—over 40 speakers. So I think it's time for us to wrap this up.

It sounds as though the NDP supports what we're doing. But I think, historically, if we look back and think about what has happened in this province over the last couple of decades when it comes to minimum wage, it makes me proud, as a Liberal, to stand here. This is exactly why I ran for office. I believe that our party has brought forward some progressive legislation that, if passed, will really correct, I think, what was done during the Harris years under the PC government. The minimum wage was locked in for eight years at \$6.85. I don't know how anyone in this province could live on that type of pay. When we got into office, we increased the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$11—that's, I think, around a 56% increase.

It's interesting. I had a group come into my constituency office last Friday, and they said, "Michael"—and these were some very progressive people. They were a bit taken aback that the NDP was silent during the entire debate. Even during the campaign by many different organized labour groups to push for a higher minimum wage, the NDP were completely silent.

In fact, in the Toronto Star, I think it was on March 4, it said, "The party's rightward shift ... seems to represent a departure from its traditional message of social justice." My question is, why isn't the NDP moving forward on this with the Liberal Party? Why isn't the NDP standing up for the people it says it represents?

Any type of increase from \$6.85 in 2003 to where we are now is a good thing for Ontario. We want to tie it to

something that's predictable, that's good for business and good for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Todd Smith: Prince Edward—Hastings, actually.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Prince Edward—Hastings. I apologize.

Mr. Todd Smith: Northumberland—Quinte West is a lovely spot; well represented, too, by my good friend Rob Milligan.

I would like to bring some comments on the 10-minute speech from the member from Niagara Falls. One of the things that the member from Niagara Falls spoke about was the difficulty that people in Ontario, and specifically to his riding in Niagara Falls, are having in dealing with the increasing cost of living in Ontario. The current government doesn't seem to understand that the decisions that they've made have seriously impacted the lives of people of Ontario and their ability to keep their homes, the ability for them to pay their bills and just the ability for them to enjoy their life here in Ontario. I don't think they quite understand that.

The member from Niagara Falls told a couple of stories. I would like to share one with you if you have a moment, Mr. Speaker, from Bill and Shirley Brennan, who actually live in my riding. If I could read this letter to you, a letter they sent to me: "I am a 78-year-old senior citizen and my wife is 75. We are trying hard to continue to live in our own home which we heat with electricity.

"At the end of January 2014 we each received an increase in our OAS"—old age security—"of 55 cents monthly and also an increase in our CPP of \$6.68 monthly.

"Our equal billing payment to Hydro One for the months of January, February and March was \$516 monthly....

"We just received a new statement with a billing date of April 1, 2014, which indicates that our Hydro One equal billing payment starting in the month of April ... will be \$709 monthly."

That's an increase of \$193 a month on their hydro bill. They got 55 cents from OAS. They got \$6.68 from CPP. This Liberal government has really made life difficult for everyday people in the province of Ontario. It's time they realized that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very proud to rise today to comment on the remarks from my colleague the member from Niagara Falls. There were many things that he said in his speech that really resonated for me as the representative of the people in London West. The constituents that live in my riding share many of the same concerns that he mentioned, concerns about having jobs for themselves and for their children.

In London, we have two wonderful post-secondary institutions, Fanshawe and Western. Many students attend

those institutions and want to remain in that community. They want to stay there, raise their own families and create a life for themselves. But London is struggling with some of the highest unemployment rates in the province.

Another thing that the member from Niagara Falls pointed out was the number of working people who are relying on food banks to just get by. This is very significant in my riding. London Food Bank has just launched a very innovative—groundbreaking, really—approach, because they have been struck by the fact that even as the unemployment rate ostensibly declines, food bank use is continuing to rise. What this means is that people are moving into the labour market, but they're moving into low-wage jobs; they're moving into precarious jobs. They are not able to find employment that sustains them and their families, and they're having to go to the food bank.

We need to take the politics out of minimum wage rate setting. We need to ensure that our minimum wage policies enable people to live with dignity and support their families in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Excellent, thank you. It's a pleasure to speak in response to the member from Niagara Falls. I would like to state just for the record right now: Although the NDP were late to the parade, I'm glad to see that they're here and running to the front with the rest of us.

Here is the thing. We all agree that raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do. We all agree that tying it to CPI is the right thing to do. We've been talking about this for about nine hours now—about nine hours, Mr. Speaker. Why don't we just get this bill to committee? And then we could talk about those things that we all think are great ideas and actually see if we can get them—

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, like Bill 71.

Mr. John Fraser: If you want to try to change the bill, then get it to committee. It's not going to happen here. So I would just like to suggest that we get this thing done and get it to committee.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we return to the member for Niagara Falls for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'll address a couple of issues around layoffs if you increase the minimum wage—it's not accurate. It puts more money in people's pockets. I explained that what you do is, every penny you make, you reinvest into the local community. I'll use the example, again, because I think it's a good one: We know it's not going to hurt job creation. Ontario increased the minimum wage from \$7.75 to \$10.25, and we saw 150,000 jobs added. So that myth that if you increase the minimum wage, people are going to lay off—it doesn't say that. It doesn't, and it helps the local economy.

As far as us coming late to the game, I don't think that's a fair comment. It was in our 2011 platform, as

you're aware. I'm not going to speak on what transpired, but I know that since I came here as an MPP, around seven or eight weeks ago, I've talked on this issue a number of times. I think it's very, very important, the minimum wage, and how important it is to our communities.

I'll just finish by saying that the NDP would also cut small business tax rates from 4.5% to 4% this June, followed by 3.5% in 2015 and fall to 3% in 2016. Our plan is about more than giving people a raise; it's about taking a balanced approach to investing in our workforce and our community. Our plan includes a gradual phase-in and tax cuts for small businesses to ensure that the change is positive for families, employers and the entire community. It's the right thing to do, and it's the smart thing to do for our children, our grandkids and our community.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just wanted to correct my record from earlier when I said that the OPP is killing this province. By "OPP," I meant the Ontario pension plan, Mr. Speaker. So I just wanted to correct that for the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014.

The bill amends the Employment Standards Act to adjust the minimum wage annually starting October 1, 2015, by indexing it to the Ontario consumer price index, or the CPI. The bill also stipulates that any changes in the minimum wage would be rounded to the nearest five cents and no adjustments would be made if it would result in a decrease to the current rate of \$10.25 an hour, which is the main minimum wage.

As our labour critic, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Monte McNaughton, pointed out, this new process is something many, including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, have long been calling for. It's something we, too, agree is a step in the right direction. But while this bill will help create better stability for employers and workers in Ontario, what it won't do is help the one million men and women who woke up this morning without a job to go to.

We have yet another piece of legislation from the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government that fails to address jobs and economic growth. My colleagues and I are generally supportive of tying the minimum wage to the consumer price index, but we certainly do not believe it is any kind of solution to the much bigger problem of getting our economy back on track.

Right now in Ontario, as I said, more than one million Ontarians are out of work. In 10 years, we've lost 300,000 jobs while the Liberal government has been in office. Most of these are well-paying manufacturing jobs. The debt has doubled. Our deficit is more than all other

provinces combined in Canada. It's been a year and a half since the Liberals prorogued the House, and still they have no jobs plans to get our province back to where it should be.

Last September, on behalf of our caucus and in my capacity as opposition House leader, I tabled a programming motion that cleared the decks and expedited the passage of, I believe, eight pieces of legislation with the clear intent to make way for the Premier to table a jobs plan. My motion opened the door for the government to restore focus to jobs and the economy.

It's now seven months later, and this government still has not introduced that jobs plan. Instead, we see more of the same bad habits from this Liberal government: more taxes and rate increases, scandal after scandal, and runaway spending.

Remember, we have an \$11.7-billion deficit and a \$273-billion debt. This Liberal government's own numbers show that they increased spending by \$5 billion over forecast last year, and they just announced another \$5.7 billion to be spent on 39 initiatives leading up to the budget; as we know, the date is May 1.

All the while, families and businesses in my riding continue to struggle. The Liberal government seemingly has no money for promised gap funding for the Collingwood hospital, which is \$1.2 million. They have no money to provide operational dollars to the Alliston hospice, Matthews House Hospice, to merely match what other hospices around Ontario are receiving. And they have no money for life-saving medication for 12-year-old Madi Vanstone, who suffers from cystic fibrosis, that would give her a chance at a good-quality life and would prolong her life, we hope, for many, many years until she passes away, like the rest of us, in old age. Madi, of course—I've raised the issue here many times in the Legislature—is a young girl, a very brave, beautiful young girl, from Beeton. And yet they have billions of dollars to spend on eHealth, Ornge and power plant scandals.

I recently launched my 2014 Simcoe—Grey business survey. So far, I have received close to 100 responses from local business owners about provincial issues affecting their business. All of them indicated high hydro rates as an issue. All of them said that further increases to business taxes will impact their livelihood. And they are very worried about—I guess it's probably going to be the cornerstone, at least according to the leaks, of the upcoming budget—the new Ontario pension plan which seems to be proposed, because that is a new payroll tax. There's nothing for free, folks; the Liberals may make it all sound very good, but at the end of the day there will be less jobs in Ontario.

All of the almost 100 businesses—again, all of them—said that they have to deal with between three and 10 provincial ministries—not one, of course, didn't have any ministry that they were dealing with—on an ongoing basis, bogging down operations, and very often they are asked for the exact same information from ministry after ministry after ministry. I got little notes on these surveys

wondering if the government even compares notes among themselves and has any plan to stop harassing these businesses.

Improving how minimum wage is determined is certainly an important process, but in the context of Ontario's overall employment rate, or Ontario's massive provincial debt and ongoing deficit, or the incredible pressures that small businesses already face, this simply shouldn't be the only thing the government is talking about. The Liberals need to look at the big picture. Our focus should be on getting people more than \$10.25 or \$11 an hour, and getting a plan in place to successfully do that.

Tim Hudak, the leader of the Ontario PCs, and our caucus have that plan: a plan to create jobs and attract businesses. It was tabled in February by Mr. Hudak. His private member's bill, entitled the Million Jobs Act, lays out the foundation of what this province needs in order to get our economy back on track and to make sure that people have a job in the first place.

The Million Jobs Act is designed to immediately begin creating jobs, and it will do the following:

(1) It will produce more jobs and increase take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt.

(2) It ensures affordable energy that will create jobs, not eliminate them.

(3) It focuses on training more skilled workers to meet the demand in trades and will help young people find good jobs.

(4) It will increase trade with other provinces, and aims to reduce internal trade barriers that cost the Canadian economy \$50 billion a year.

(5) Finally, it eliminates the bureaucratic runaround that inhibits job creation, lifting the heavy hand of government and reducing the some 300,000 regulations in Ontario that bog businesses in paperwork.

I think the most important thing that I can point out this afternoon and add to the debate here, focusing on Bill 165, is that one of the main concerns about the minimum wage in general is that almost 10% of the workforce is on minimum wage. In 10 years under Liberal reign, the number of Ontarians working in minimum wage jobs has gone from 3.5% of the workforce in 2003 to 6.3% in 2007, to 8.1% in 2009, and now to almost 10% in 2014. The increase is dramatic, and it's not good for our businesses or our families across the province.

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In contrast, when we were in government there was a decrease in the rate of workers in minimum wage jobs. Those making minimum wage went from 4.6% in the year 2000 to 4.1% in 2001, to 3.9% in 2002 and, finally, to 3.5% in 2003. The facts speak for themselves. It's clear from these numbers that the path that this government is taking us down is not in the best interests of our province and our families.

While the Liberals and the NDP focus so heavily on minimum wage jobs, the PCs are focused on getting people making minimum wage into careers. A small increase to minimum wage is not going to do that in and

of itself, especially when the Premier is hitting people with all kinds of other taxes at the same time, and I warn you about the new payroll tax coming up in the form of a pension.

I also believe that we will have to look at the impact a minimum wage increase would have on the small business community. I've heard from a number of businesses, as I said, in my riding, and the general consensus is that a wage increase may force them to re-examine the number of employees they have. One small business owner in Collingwood explained that he already pays his employees more than the minimum wage as a way to recognize their hard work and, in return, it gives them incentive to work hard. He worries that an additional wage increase would make it hard for him to keep that up and would likely result in having to lay off staff.

In October, I met with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association on this issue. At the time, they had heard rumours that the minimum wage might increase to \$14 an hour. They warned that this level of increase would lead to the closure of approximately 20% of their stores. They also indicated their concern with the increasing cost of energy as their stores depend on a lot of refrigeration and cooling.

So, Mr. Speaker, we should thoroughly examine the benefits of increases to the minimum wage as there is evidence to suggest that low-income workers do not significantly benefit from a wage increase. Look at Alberta. They have the lowest minimum wage as well as the lowest poverty rates in all of Canada. In that province, minimum wage doesn't seem to be tied to the financial situation of low-income earners. There are other ways to improve the plight of low-income workers.

Having said that, we will support this legislation. It is a small step in the right direction, but the government needs to do other things, like lower taxes overall. Stop taking people's money in the first place. Leave it in their pockets, and then you wouldn't have to worry so much about the minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I was listening to the official opposition House leader and he had mentioned that—I think he said out west. I think he said Alberta has a lower minimum wage than Ontario and it doesn't seem to be a problem out there. There's no poverty out there. People are surviving on that lower minimum wage.

I throw out there that they're probably working two, three, four, five and six jobs on minimum wage just to make ends meet. There's absolutely no realistic explanation that someone can live on minimum wage, have a home, send their kids to secondary education, PSE—post-secondary education—pay for a pension and put good, quality, healthy food on the table. I beg to differ with that fact. He could prove me wrong if he likes, but I certainly don't agree with that.

Minimum wage, Speaker—and I've heard the Liberal government members also speak about how they want to

pass this bill and get it on to committee. I've heard that mantra several times on different bills, and it's really concerning. I recall the family caregiver bill. They were pushing that, you know, we needed to send that off and we didn't need any more speakers. I think it was the blood donor bill as well that they wanted to push off and not have any speakers on. And now this is the third bill that they're asking us to quickly move through the channels of the House so that we can get to other business.

Speaker, we need to respect the democratic process of this House, and we need to hear—if people want to speak to this bill who represent members of their riding, they need to stand up and do that and not be pressured or pushed by the agenda of this government to move things through the House at their speed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Simcoe—Grey on Bill 165, which is the Fair Minimum Wage Act. I want to correct a misimpression that he may have left. He talked about small business owners being concerned because they thought that the minimum wage would be going up to \$14. In fact, the minimum wage is going to \$11 in June, which actually represents the cost-of-living increase, approximately, since the last increase in the minimum wage.

But that's not what this bill does. What this bill does is what small business owners that I've heard from have said that we should do, which is to have a fair and regular increment, because they can handle that. It's fair; it's predictable.

What this bill actually does is arrange to have the minimum wage go up by the cost of living on an annual basis. The measure would be the CPI, the consumer price index. That's what the bill actually does.

One of the things I've learned around here is that when everybody who gets up to debate the bill talks about something other than the actual content of the bill, the debate has probably run its useful course. That's what I've heard today: people talking about everything other than the content of the bill. That's probably because we've spent well over nine hours—probably almost 10. Well over 40 different speakers in the Legislature have commented. I really do think it's time that we sent this bill off to committee and moved it along.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I'm just pleased to rise and comment on our member from way up north in the Collingwood area with regard to Bill 165.

Back in my training days, I used to work with many, many different corporations. One of the things that I would always say to them was, "If you treat your employees fairly and treat them with respect, they'll want to work harder for you." In many of these cases, a lot of these employees were, in fact, working for minimum wage. But then I would turn to these employees and I

would say, "You know what? You should always be working for a raise, because if your current employer doesn't give you one, then someone else will."

I don't believe that this minimum wage is a wage that has been designed for people to live on. People get accustomed perhaps to this particular minimum wage. Increasing it to \$11—it's tough to pay your bills on that; I'm sure it is. Therefore, oftentimes you'll find employees maybe having to carry two jobs in order to make ends meet.

But then I say to them, "What's your motivation to stay in that job at a minimum wage? What are you doing for yourself in order to better yourself so that you're not in that minimum wage category?" Again, "Working for a raise." If your current employer doesn't give you that raise, someone else will. To me, that's self-pride. That's people taking charge of their own careers and looking at it and saying, "You know what? I can better myself. I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And golly, people like me." Of course, that was taken right out of Saturday Night Live; I know. But the fact of the matter remains: People need to take control of their own destiny.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Question and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the comments that were made by the member for Simcoe—Grey, and I just wanted to speak to a couple of the issues on behalf of the people I represent in London West. I think that this legislation is a very important step forward. I am glad to see that we are finally taking the politics out of minimum wage rate setting. We saw the Tories, certainly, use minimum wage as a political tool when they were in office, and we have seen, on the Liberal side of the House, four years of inaction when the minimum wage was sitting at \$10.25. Nothing was happening as the cost of living was increasing, and finally, in the middle of a by-election, there was an announcement that the minimum wage was going to increase.

That's not responsible, in terms of the people that we represent. It's not a fair and transparent way to respond to the issues that we face in our communities. I support the way that this legislation depoliticizes setting the minimum wage by tying the increases to the cost of living.

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One of the things that I am concerned about, however, is the fact that the increase uses an \$11 figure as a benchmark. What this does is, it institutionalizes minimum wage earners below the poverty line. Even as their wages increase with the cost of living, there is still a gap to take minimum wage earners above the poverty line, which is why New Democrats have proposed a \$12 minimum wage as a the benchmark before cost-of-living indexing sets in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I go back to the member for Simcoe—Grey for his response.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the responses from the member for London—Fanshawe, the Minister of Education, and the members for London West and Chatham—Kent—Essex.

I'd say to the Minister of Education, the member for Guelph, that there was nothing in my 10-minute remarks that didn't talk about jobs and minimum wage. I know you hate when we talk about Tim Hudak's, the leader of the PC Party's, Million Jobs Act, because you don't have a jobs plan of your own. We've given you lots of opportunity to bring one forward, so before I finish this two minutes, I'm going to talk about it again.

Secondly, I agree with the member from London West, who just spoke: The good part about this bill is, it does take politics out of future increases—I hope. As a member here for many years, at one time I thought maybe we should have a committee of outside panellists so that people don't use it as a political football. I like that part of the bill. I see that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce agrees with it. It will, as the Minister of Education and others on the government side have said, stabilize the issue for a while.

It's a sad fact that, in my 23 years, I have never stood here before with 10% of the working population on minimum wage. It usually hovered around 3.1% to 4%. Clearly, the path of this government has brought us down, and it really is a spiral down. It isn't working.

Time and time again, we give you an opportunity for a jobs plan. We cleared the deck seven months ago, when Kathleen Wynne said, "If you pass some of these bills, Mr. Hudak, we'll bring forward a jobs plan." You never did that, and I doubt you're going to do that on May 1 with the budget.

The million jobs plan we brought forward will create more jobs. Whether you like it or not, it's based on what Mr. Hudak, the leader of the PC Party, and I did—and you, Mr. Speaker—as part of a cabinet many years ago. We created a million net new jobs in the province. We know how to do it, and we're going to ask the voters for a chance to do it again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak to Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, on its second reading. This is a very important bill, Speaker, to myself and my constituents in London-Fanshawe, as we are faced with a higher-than-average unemployment rate. It's no secret in this House that that's the case. Since I have had the privilege and honour to represent my constituents in London-Fanshawe, those are questions I have brought over and over again: about the unemployment rate in London and how people need good-paying manufacturing jobs.

We're also here today talking about the fact that this brings to light that how much people earn per hour is vital to our ability to bounce back from these tough economic times. From this government, we know that there has been no real, substantial job creation—in the city of London, anyway. It's very important we talk about how this is affecting the people of our ridings.

Some, like this government, will say that \$11 an hour is more than a fair increase to the minimum wage. However, what I have found interesting with this bill is

that it doesn't actually call for an increase to the minimum wage to \$11 per hour. What it actually does do is, it references a regulation that sets the dollar amount of the minimum wage, and it essentially says that, as of October 1, 2014, the percentage annual increase in the minimum wage will be equal to the consumer price index, or CPI. Fundamentally, all Bill 165 is attempting to accomplish is to enact a CPI-based indexing of the minimum wage in this province. The regulation the government has put into place to implement the \$11 minimum wage—and other levels for different classes of workers such as students—is now official and in e-Laws and is set to come into effect on June 1, 2014.

From this point forward, however, the minimum wage will be tied to the increase in the CPI, with the first CPI-linked increase to the minimum wage coming into effect on October 1, 2015.

Further, there does not appear to be a way to amend the legislation to get at the actual amount and amend it, with this bill in its current form. After years of inaction, the Liberal plan falls short of delivering a modicum of fairness to Ontario workers and families.

Families are being squeezed, Speaker, harder than ever before, and the response from this government is to target a technicality minimum wage to CPI? With people's bills increasing and paycheques decreasing, it seems to me like Ontarians are looking for us to do more.

My NDP colleagues and I believe that we need a better approach than the Liberal government is taking. New Democrats have a plan that is practical and responsible, to ensure that small business can grow and to help families facing poverty.

We believe that we can realistically increase the minimum wage by 50 cents in 2015 and do the same thing again in 2016. Moreover, we know that in order to implement effective minimum wage increases, Ontario's small businesses need help to offset these increases to wages.

The solutions that we propose are better thought out and more comprehensive than what the Liberal government is proposing. That's why, Speaker, we're proposing to lower taxes for small businesses while raising the minimum wage.

In addition, the NDP would crack down on tax avoidance, close loopholes and place fair and reasonable limits on public sector CEO salaries. This ensures that we can move forward with positive steps that ensure that our small business sector stays strong and can grow.

We have taken our time, listened to people earning the minimum wage, and spoken to small businesses paying the minimum wage, to find a practical, reasonable solution that sees workers and businesses thrive.

We know that both sides of this Legislature are fond of borrowing ideas—it has happened many times over the years—and this is one that we hope you'll take to heart.

Ontario's New Democrats have a plan to support small businesses as well as the lowest-paid workers in the province by phasing in a series of reductions in the small

business tax rate while increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour over two years.

Economic responsibility can and will lift hard-working Ontarians out of poverty while allowing small businesses to keep driving our economy forward, as they always have done. That's what our plan is geared to achieve.

Speaker, based on a minimum wage of \$11 an hour as of June 1, 2014, the NDP's three-part plan includes: a 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$11.50 on June 1, 2015; a further 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$12 on June 1, 2016; and annual cost-of-living increases, plus four months' notice for businesses. So we're going to have a CPI, which is the consumer price index, be increased, but we're going to have businesses have a four-month planning period for that.

These increases to the minimum wage will be accompanied by a reduction in the effective small business corporate tax rate as follows: a reduction from what the rate is now for small businesses—4.5% to 4% as of June 1, 2014; a further reduction from 4% to 3.5% on June 1, 2015; and then a reduction from 3.5% to 3% on June 1, 2016.

Speaker, this is a reasonable way of having the minimum wage increase but also helping the small business community in our neighbourhoods, which is the meat and potatoes and the roots of a lot of job creation in our neighbourhoods and communities—and they need that help.

So we're phasing the tax rate from 4.5%—from 2014 to 2016—to 3%, to help small businesses continue to thrive, create these jobs and keep our jobs. These cuts to the small business tax rate by a mere 0.5% will provide small business owners with essentially \$90 million in tax relief annually. This dramatically helps to offset any minimum wage increases and keeps our small business sector competitive.

1650

The NDP plan also calls for: immediate action on public sector CEO salaries and management bonuses—that's something we have to incorporate into this whole equation; the closure of the Liberals' new corporate tax loopholes worth \$1.1 billion annually; and a crackdown on corporate tax avoidance following the Auditor General's 2010 report finding, which actually stated that the Ontario government had left over \$2.4 billion in corporate taxes uncollected while laying off tax enforcement agents. That is not the way to reward businesses that are keeping tax dollars and not creating jobs. We should be having that enforcement so that we can collect those revenues from those tax avoidances that businesses are not paying.

I also find it perplexing that this government, which is currently embarking on a fire sale of provincial assets, could ignore or, worse yet, not bother to collect more than \$2.4 billion of tax money from corporations. I know what the NDP could accomplish with \$2.4 billion, and now we know for certain what the Liberal government is capable of doing with it—quite frankly, probably nothing productive—because they haven't addressed that issue.

Sadly, the amount of money that the Liberals walked away from in uncollected corporate taxes is more than they squandered away on the gas plant seat-saver plan. That's a scandal I think they're going to wear for a very long time.

One of the things that I wish all of us here could share is an understanding that low wages not only affect people's pocketbooks but their overall health, mental health and well-being as well. Wages below the poverty line increase rates of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease, migraines and bronchitis, compared to decent wages. Low-wage workers also have much lower rates of insurance coverage for vision, dental, prescription medication and hospital care services, leaving them and their families in a generally poor state of health.

I think it's important today that we do have debates on minimum wage and we understand that there are better ways to help this actual minimum wage dilemma that we're facing. The Liberals have put something forward. It's good that it's on the table and we're discussing it, but I hope that when this gets passed and it does go to committee that we have some of the things that I've just talked about incorporated in these ideas.

I look forward to people's questions and comments on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I rise to join the debate on Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act. The opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 165 by continuing to put up speakers. The bill has now been debated for 10 hours. Over 41 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. Listening to the debate, it's been clear that the majority of members are in support of the bill. This signals that there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill, and their only goal is to delay. I'm calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us pass this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to rise here in the chamber. This is just another example of this Liberal government trying to prevent the opposition party and the third party from debating—our democratic right—and expressing our concerns about a bill. The government has the ability to get this bill through, but I think the constituents in Northumberland-Quinte West would expect that their elected official, myself, would stand up and express their concerns.

I want to thank the member from London-Fanshawe. She obviously has some convictions that she stands behind, and you have to respect that. One of the beautiful things about being in this House, within all three parties, is that we have our convictions. Our ideologies don't always mix, but there are some things that we can find some common ground on.

I do, however, have some major concerns.

As I pointed out, good-paying jobs, there are lots to be had. Tim Hudak, our leader of the PC Party, has a plan, particularly when it comes to the trades and the high-skilled trades—the 1-to-1 ratio. These are good-paying jobs. You want to create jobs that are good-paying in the province of Ontario. This is an indication; this is a plan that we're putting forward that is going to create jobs that aren't minimum wage jobs. Mr. Speaker, these are great manufacturing jobs, as the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex points out. We have a plan to move forward to create good-paying jobs here in the province of Ontario, and that is how you kick-start the economy. That's how you lead, and that's how you get Ontario back on track.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I enjoy standing up and listening to some of this debate, because it's really interesting. On one side, we've got a government that is raising minimum wage to a certain level—not to where we would like to see it, but it is moving in the right direction—and then I've got another party over here saying that with all the poverty in the province, they are going to create a million jobs.

I'll tell the official opposition: If you get me 5,000 jobs for the fourth-largest city in Ontario, which is Hamilton, I would be ecstatic. So I don't know where you're going to get these million jobs from. I think the million jobs are on Mars.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: They're dreaming. I think it's on Mars; I'm not sure, because it isn't Ontario, I'll tell you that much.

I really love it when they talk about poverty. Well, I know that about a year and a half ago there were three members of this House who took the challenge to live on what you get in a food bank hamper. Three—I was one of them. I lasted three days. I ate what I had: Kraft Dinner and all the stuff they hand out. It's not nutritious, and the doctor should know that. It's not nutritious, it's crappy food, and I was starved after the third day.

But all of a sudden, these guys are going to create a million jobs, all \$50,000- and \$60,000-a-year jobs. Amazing. The poverty level in Ontario is \$19,000 in a city. Your situation is not going to help those jobs in the city, trust me. I'll be happy if you can help Hamilton out just a little weeny bit, but you can't.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: I won't get my 5,000 jobs; I won't get 1,000 jobs. It's unbelievable how you can stand up and try to tell the people of Ontario you are going to create a million jobs when we've already lost 350,000 jobs. But all of a sudden—oh, I forgot: It's going to be 350,000 that they're going to get back, plus a million. So actually it's 1.3 million jobs they're going to create. You're dreaming—dreaming.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: In the opposition party, the dream does live on; that's for sure.

I just want to comment on my friend from Northumberland–Quinte West when he talked about his convictions and his ideologies. Let me tell you, Speaker, whenever there's a good piece of legislation put before this House, I can tell you, they filibuster and they delay. There's no more need. We all agree on this in this House. Send this to committee. Let's move it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return now to the member for London–Fanshawe for her reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Actually, I'm very delighted that I received some questions and comments from the member from York Centre, but you spoke about how we're needlessly extending debate. That's disappointing. But thank you for your questions and comments.

I would also like to recognize the members from Northumberland–Quinte West, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I just heard the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell say, again, “Push this bill through; push this bill through.” You need to hear the NDP proposal. You need to hear it because it's going to be really important when you get to committee, because if history repeats itself—as it has been doing in committee—you're going to see that the NDP is going to make really effective, strong amendments that are actually going to help people. That's what you need to hear. I don't know which members will be on that committee, but the ones who aren't—maybe you could talk to your colleagues who aren't here who are going to be on that committee and explain what great proposals we have.

1700

So I say, come on; stand up. Let's hear your amendments to this bill, because we know that every time this bill goes to committee, it needs to have better things done to it and more work on it. So maybe our comments spark some ideas that you can give us back, and that's what debate is all about. Our ideas are brought to the floor. Maybe that will incentivize you or excite you to bring some ideas other than this bill, because we know it needs a lot of work. Everybody says it needs a lot of work. So I look forward, when this bill does get passed, that it goes to committee and some of our amendments are adopted and we can make it a stronger bill. With many, many bills before this House, NDP members have made those bills much stronger and more effective for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today to add to the debate regarding Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to the minimum wage.

Minimum wage has in fact been a popular topic not only in the province of Ontario but all over North America. A great deal has actually been said regarding the issue, and now it has garnered the attention of the current government.

We can all agree that raising the minimum wage from time to time on a whim is probably not the most

responsible way to handle such a crucial policy, as it leaves businesses scrambling to try and figure out how they will shallow sudden increased costs.

A wise person once told me, Speaker, and I'm sure you would appreciate this, that it's not about how much money you make; it's about how much money you keep. I think there's a lot of truth in that. If lifting Ontarians out of poverty is the end goal, raising the minimum wage may not be the most effective option.

Exemptions in provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan are almost double what they currently are in Ontario. Such policies allow minimum wage earners to keep more money in their pockets at the end of the day, which is really what we should be striving for here today in Ontario.

It's my hope that the government has additional plans to offer other than just a minimum wage hike. This bill is one that I will be supporting, but it's only a piece of the puzzle—just a small piece of the puzzle.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has recommended that governments give businesses at least six months' notice when increasing minimum wage so they can adequately prepare for increased costs and other changes. Businesses large and small must be able to plan ahead for things like potentially higher payroll taxes when these policies are implemented. Unfortunately, in this case, businesses were only given four months' notice to get ready.

In the future, however, Bill 165 will provide structure and allow job creators to prepare for increases to the minimum wage. By tying future increases to the Ontario consumer price index, CPI, there will be more predictability when it comes to minimum wage. This is something that has been called for by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and we are glad to see that they're calling for this. These concerns have been incorporated in the bill, as mentioned earlier.

As I also previously mentioned, minimum wage has been a hot issue around the province for the past several months. The topic has come up many times in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

My personal motto has always been, and will continue to be, "accessible and accountable," so I met with groups on every side of the issue to hear specifically what they had to say and to educate myself on the issue properly. All parties seemed to agree that something should be done, but they often disagreed about exactly how that should be handled. We need to ensure that raising the minimum wage is done in a way that will actually benefit those working in Ontario instead of indirectly hurting them.

Many local business owners in my riding, the job creators in our community, are currently having a rough time keeping their doors open. Specifically, many of them are struggling just to keep the lights on.

I asked many business owners point-blank, "What's preventing you from expanding, or hiring more people, or giving your employees a raise?" Well, what I heard time and time again was that rising energy costs are in fact crippling businesses in Chatham-Kent-Essex.

For example, I spoke to a butcher in Chatham about the challenges of operating a business in Ontario today. His family business has been serving our community for the better half of a century now. This particular butcher shop requires a lot of electricity to run all of the refrigerators and freezers in his family-owned establishment. Because of this, he was worried that he may not be able to hire as many employees for the summer months, when he typically sees a spike in business. This is just one example, but there are countless others. These are the types of summer jobs that the youth of Chatham-Kent-Essex rely upon as they work their way through high school, then college or university.

Many local businesses have told me, quite bluntly, that there was just no way that they could take the hit of a sudden increase of minimum wage to \$14 an hour—and that was discussed and talked about several months ago—from, at that time, the current \$10.25 an hour. I was told on more than one occasion that such a drastic change would force employers to scale back on hours or reduce their total number of employees altogether. Now, we're going back to lost jobs and unemployment.

Various lobby groups, including Unifor Local 127, who I met back in my office in December, lobbied for a \$14-an-hour minimum wage. A one-time increase of that size would have the unintended consequence of forcing many minimum wage earners out of work. It would encourage many businesses to leave the province faster than they already are leaving—thanks, in large part, to this reckless Liberal government's energy policies and their scandal-plagued mismanagement of the province's finances.

Back when the minimum wage was increased from \$8.75 to \$10.25, my riding lost jobs, even in the greenhouse sector. The greenhouse growers were effectively forced to give all of their workers a raise of \$1.50 an hour more, not just those earning minimum wage, but everyone in their employ—an additional \$1.50. More job losses is not what we need here in Ontario. We certainly don't need any more job losses in Chatham-Kent-Essex. Thankfully, this bill seeks to make a more gradual change that we hope will minimize the job losses that can sometimes come about when a minimum wage is hiked.

I'm more concerned with creating good energy policies, minimizing red tape, lowering taxes, improving efficiencies and having a lack of scandals when it comes to running our province's finances so that we can attract more high-quality jobs to this great province of Ontario. That will keep existing jobs here in Ontario and bring more investment to the province.

While we often get stuck on the amount that minimum wage pays, we should also focus on the staggering number of Ontarians who are forced to work for this wage. Here is an absolutely shocking statistic that I want to share with the good people in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex and anyone else who may be watching this debate at home: Almost 10% of Ontario's workforce is on minimum wage. In 2003, it was a mere 3.5%. Coincidentally, that was the year that this now scandal-

ridden government came into power. The percentage of Ontarians on minimum wage has almost tripled, 10 years later, during their reign. It appears that Ontario is already winning the race to the bottom under the Dalton McGuinty-Kathleen Wynne government.

Welcome to Kathleen Wynne's Ontario: more minimum wage jobs, less well-paying jobs. What the people of Chatham-Kent-Essex want to see is a strong focus on creating an environment that will allow jobs to come back to Ontario. They want to see good jobs, ones that will provide a strong foundation upon which they can support themselves and their families. They want a little extra money in their pockets—more green in their jeans, as I call it—so that they can support local businesses or start to save up for a new house. This government has bragged that Ontario has the highest minimum wage in the country, but it will not comment on how Ontario compares to other provinces and jurisdictions when it comes to take-home pay after taxes.

1710

Although we're only discussing minimum wage jobs this afternoon in the Legislature, it is surprising to see that this government is starting to pay attention to private sector jobs. I only have a few seconds left, and I want to quickly share: When I was discussing, that cold winter day outside my office, with Unifor 127, and they were telling me that I needed to support a \$14-an-hour increase, I took six of those people standing in front of my office and said, "You're a boss, and you other five work for this boss. If this boss is forced to pay an extra \$4 an hour, that's \$20 an hour, times eight hours a day. That's \$160 a day extra in wage, but they don't have anything to show for it. Multiply that times five or six days a week. Multiply that by 50 weeks. Now you're looking at probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$50,000 extra in added wages."

Speaker, we will support this bill, but we can't allow small businesses to die.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to address some of the comments that were made by the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

In particular, he talked about his conversation with members of Unifor Local 27, which is a proud member of my community; that is a labour union that has contributed greatly to our local economy and just to quality of life in London. But what the members of Unifor Local 27 recognize and what the NDP recognizes in our response to the legislation is that minimum wage policy really is economic policy. The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex talked about the possibility of job losses, but all of the evidence shows that increasing the minimum wage really primes the pump for the economy. Increasing the disposable incomes of people who have the lowest wages causes them to go out and spend. They pump more money into the economy, and it really is a benefit to us overall.

At the same time, we do recognize that there are inevitable cash flow realities for small businesses, that even the smallest increases in payroll costs can be difficult for some small businesses to manage. They have less flexibility in responding nimbly to increased cost pressures. That is why the NDP has proposed a reduction in the small business corporate tax rate, from 4.5% to 3% by 2016, at the same time that we're pushing for an increase in minimum wage to \$12 an hour as of the same time, 2016.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say the opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 165 as they are continuing to put up speakers. This bill has now been debated for over 10 hours. Over 43 members of the Legislature have either spoken to the bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. It's clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill. It is clear there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate. The only goal is to delay.

So I'm calling on the opposition parties to quit stalling. Let's move this bill on. Let's pass this important piece of legislation. Let's get it done. People are counting on us to get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Northumberland-Quinte West.

Mr. Todd Smith: You got it wrong again, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Just look at me and think "prince." Everything will be fine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings. Next time I'll get it right.

Mr. Todd Smith: You'll never forget that now.

I would like to add a few comments to my friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who spoke on Bill 165, and some comments from the other members of the Legislature as well.

First of all, I would like to commend the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who realizes there is more to this debate than just talking about a \$1-an-hour increase in the minimum wage. There is a larger issue here, and that is, we need to address why we're not creating good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario and why those good-paying jobs are actually leaving Ontario for other jurisdictions. He mentioned the fact that our party, the only one that actually has a credible jobs plan, has addressed the issues that we need to address, those fundamentals that need to change in the province of Ontario.

If you listen to the member from London West, who just added some comments, it seems to me that if the NDP were ever elected government in Ontario again, a \$25 minimum wage would be just fine with the NDP, because it's going to prime that pump. It really scares small business owners across the province when they hear the third party speak of raising the minimum wage

higher and higher, because it is having a negative impact, and it will have a negative impact, on the small businesses in my area. I know there has been a lot of discussion in the media about the McDonald's of the world and the Walmarts and the big corporations, but I'm looking after the majority of employers in this province, and they are small business owners who simply can't afford unpredictable increases to the minimum wage that are going to have a negative impact on their business and ultimately cost jobs in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I say thank you to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I enjoy rising again and talking to my colleagues, but it was kind of disappointing over the course of this afternoon, where one of our members talked as if people enjoy working in a minimum wage job and that it's almost like it's their fault. I can tell you, in my riding of Niagara, and, quite frankly, probably right around the province of Ontario, people lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Ontario workers go to work every day. They work hard. They're highly skilled. They're highly motivated. Their productivity is outstanding. But they go to work one day and what happens? They get called into the lunchroom and they're told that their plant is closing and they're not going to be entitled to any severance pay.

This is what happened at Vertis in Stevensville. Those workers, what did they have to do? They couldn't get their severance. The plant was closing. That same company was shipping the work right back into Ontario; they opened a plant just on the other side of the border and then they ship it right back to Lowe's—an almost continuous operation.

Nobody wants to lose their job in a plant. But what they all want to do, what we all want to do—as fathers, as grandfathers, we want to provide for our family. When you lose your job, guess what happens? You have to do what you have to do, and sometimes that means going to get a minimum wage job. Yes, you don't have the same benefit level and you might not have a pension plan, but you go and try to do the best you can for your family.

On this particular case, I ran into one of those workers from Vertis on Sunday, before I came up here. On Sunday night, I went to get gas at Gales gas bar in Niagara Falls on Lundy's Lane. The worker came up to me and said, "I'm from Vertis. We could never get our severance pay from the company, and this is the only job I could get."

So I think we should be very careful in this House on what we say about people that are desperate, that have to get a minimum wage job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now go back to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex for his response.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I want to thank the member from London West. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care really didn't comment on 165. I also

want to acknowledge the member from Todd Smith Edward-Hastings—sorry, it's Prince Edward-Hastings; that's what it is—and, of course, the member from Niagara Falls for your comment as well. I appreciate that. I know the member from Niagara Falls—you speak from the heart. I know that.

To the member from London West: As you know, Navistar was in my riding. Unifor 127—I have a good working relationship with the members of 127 because they also know that from day one, when I went into office, I went to bat for them to try and get those jobs back that, unfortunately, Navistar shut them out on. Of course, now they're embroiled in a legal battle, trying to get their pensions and severances as well. I'm also going to bat for them as well, because these are people in my riding. These are people that we live with. Maybe we've coached their kids in hockey or some sports program, or we see them in the grocery stores. Unfortunately, these people are in desperate need because they've used up all of their savings, and that bothers me like you would not believe—well, you would appreciate that.

1720

Again, we talked about this bill, Bill 165, and we also talked about its importance. Minimum wage is what it is. What we're trying to do is increase it from \$10.25 to \$11 an hour. I mentioned earlier in my speech that sometimes it's not how much money you make, it's how much money you are able to keep; in other words, that green in your jeans. If we can allow people to have greater disposable income—we have to look at other ways of how we can make that happen. Sometimes raising the minimum wage for businesses is not as easy as one might think.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 165.

Before I do so, if you could grant me a little bit of leeway here, I would like to point out that we have three states of emergency now declared back in my riding of Prince Edward-Hastings: a serious flood in the Foxboro area of Belleville, where a state of emergency was declared on Thursday, and then just this afternoon, a state of emergency was declared in Tweed as well as the municipality of Centre Hastings. My thoughts are with the emergency measures teams in all three of those municipalities. They've been doing a great job with a team of about 500 volunteers in Belleville over the weekend to get the sandbags out there and make sure that the Moira River doesn't impact on too many properties. Congratulations to those who are in charge of the emergency measures team and playing an integral role around the table for all three of these municipalities, and of course the community members that have come from right across the province, from Waterloo to Ottawa and all parts in between, to the Hastings county municipalities that have been hit. We appreciate that, and our thoughts are with them right now.

It is an honour to rise and speak to Bill 165. We will be supporting that. I know that a lot of groups had

significant concerns about increasing the minimum wage, especially when I was small business and red tape critic and I had the opportunity, on behalf of the official opposition, to meet with small businesses in my riding and small businesses right across the province. They were worried about the effect that a steep increase in the minimum wage would have on their business. It would make it harder for them to make ends meet and keep their business going.

In small-town Ontario, like in Tweed, Bancroft, Bloomfield and Stirling, independently owned businesses are, of course, the backbone of the economy. A lot of the time, they make up the majority of the jobs that are available in that community. Over the course of the debate on this bill, not just in the House but in the press, there seems to be this idea that we're only talking about these huge mega-corporations like the golden arches and Walmart and other big, big companies. The people I'm worried about, Mr. Speaker, aren't necessarily the employees there. I'm worried about the small business owners in my community, whether it's a bed and breakfast in Cherry Valley or maybe one of the beautiful Prince Edward county wineries or a farm in Hastings county or a general store up in Coe Hill. These are the types of businesses that are employing people in my riding, in my community, and we have to make sure that we protect these job creators.

What the government doesn't seem to understand is that overhead dictates jobs if you're a business. There are costs that you can control, and there are costs that you can't control. All businesses have costs. As a matter of fact, they have lots of costs. What the cost is obviously depends on the business, but in my former role as small business critic for our caucus I heard from businesses right across the province about how the things that this government was doing were increasing the cost of them doing business.

Wages are a big part of the cost of doing business, and they're frequently one of the largest costs for business owners. We have got plenty of good small business owners who would love to pay their employees more because they recognize what an asset a good employee is to a small business, but their other costs are being driven sky-high.

The number-one cost that we talk about all the time here in the Legislature, because it is impacting our job creators and our investors in this province, is electricity. The cost of electricity has doubled in the last decade in Ontario. It has been said many times that when this government took office in 2003, Ontario had the lowest electricity prices in North America. Today, we have the highest cost of electricity in North America. If you don't think that that has an impact on business owners right across the province, you're sadly mistaken, because it has cost us hundreds and thousands of jobs across the province already. We're expecting another 42% increase in the cost of electricity in the next four or five years because of what has happened with the Green Energy Act.

This government has also increased the regulatory burden on every small business in the province, to the point where trying to open a business, or even hire a new employee, creates a mountain of red tape and paperwork, and many small business owners simply don't have the time to deal with it. Small business owners are telling me now that, on average, they're spending eight hours a week dealing with red tape, government paperwork, and they just simply don't have the time to do it. If they're hit with high electricity costs and if they're hit with an increase in minimum wage, it's making it even more difficult for them to manage their business. If you're a manufacturer, you have to also factor in the costs of raw materials and transportation, which are going up; and they have gone up because of this government's policies.

As I said, we'll be supporting the bill, but I think we've done a disservice to the actual debate about the minimum wage when it comes to how we've talked about it. Right now, 10% of Ontario's workforce is working in a minimum wage job—10%. One out of every 10 people working today works in a minimum wage job. Our goal should not be to create more minimum wage jobs; our goal as a government should be to create an environment where investors want to come in here and create good-paying jobs. A decade ago, not only did we have the lowest hydro costs in all of North America; we also had, a decade ago, 3.5% of our workforce on minimum wage. Now it's 10%. In 10 years, it has gone up that much.

The idea that increasing the minimum wage will lift anyone out of poverty or create jobs that move people off minimum wage is a myth that our own economic history as a province tells us. I spoke of overhead earlier; it's because I think the basic notion is lost on members of this government. The more it costs you to do business, the more you end up having to sell the product for. If you're stocking shelves at a corner store and you're making minimum wage at that corner store, the shop owner has to pay you a higher wage. But because he still has to make money, he's going to have to sell milk and bread in that same convenience store for more. People earning the minimum wage do deserve to see it increase, but they deserve a lot more from their government.

We've talked about Ontario's economy and the problems that this government has foisted on it. I wanted to take the time to quote a former Ontario Deputy Minister of Finance who had a column recently in the *Globe and Mail*. Here's the quote:

"Ontario's productivity performance has been abysmal for the past 10 years." Again, we go back to the 10 years, and we all know who has been in power for the last 10 years. "Yet most forecasts have it returning to roughly its longer-term historical average. Budget projections count on it.

"Yet why should we believe that? Much depends on the location decisions of global corporations that serve the North American market from multiple plants."

I can tell you that when I meet with my Quinte Manufacturers Association, they are under continuous pressure from their head office—whether it be in the United States

or whether it be somewhere in Europe or wherever it is around the globe—to keep that facility located and opening in this high-cost jurisdiction of Ontario.

Let me tell you a story again about one of the manufacturing facilities in Belleville. Here's one of the anecdotes that I find most telling when it comes to the economic climate that we now have in Ontario. It's about a company in my riding that actually received a government cheque from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Two and a half years ago, their hydro bill was \$138,000 a month—138 grand a month for their hydro bill, two and a half years ago. Last December, it was \$325,000, and by the end of the government's long-term energy plan, it's going to be \$465,000 a month. The cheque that they received from the EODF was for \$237,000. Hey, thank you very much. We'll take the \$237,000, but two years from now, that's not even going to cover half of their electricity bill. This isn't creating jobs. This is subsidizing the hydro rate increases that this government has rammed down the throats of the province's manufacturing sector.

1730

Running a business, like running a province, is a complex process that relies on a combination of factors, but there are a few basic underlying principles. One of them is that you don't price yourself out of the market, and Ontario has priced itself out of the market when it comes to foreign investment.

It's apparent that this government is just fine with creating minimum wage jobs. But I can tell you that here on the opposition bench, with the Ontario PC Party, under our leader, Tim Hudak, and our million jobs plan, we're not going to settle for creating more minimum wage jobs in Ontario. We're going to create more good-paying jobs in Ontario. People will get off the welfare rolls, they'll get off the minimum wage and be able to provide a successful life for them and their families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today on behalf of my constituents in London West to respond to the comments from the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

One of the things he said in his speech that I think is key to the whole debate that we're having right now is the fact that the number of minimum wage workers in this province more than doubled. It was just over 4% in 2003, when the Liberal government took office, and now we're looking at almost 10% of workers in this province working in minimum wage jobs.

There is definitely a need to create some good jobs in this province, and there is also a need to lift those minimum wage earners out of poverty. They are working as hard as they can at minimum wage jobs and they are still living below the poverty line.

But what's really insightful is when we look at who are the 10% of workers, who are those 10% of Ontarians who are earning minimum wages, working, struggling to get by. The majority of those workers—60%—are women, many of whom are sole-support parents strug-

gling to raise a family. So 60% of minimum wage earners are women, and they experience particular challenges and barriers in the labour market.

We also know that racialized workers and recent immigrants are very overrepresented among minimum wage earners. In particular, about one in five recent immigrants to this province is working at a minimum wage. That's more than double the rate of all Ontarians.

So increasing the minimum wage—this legislation on minimum wage—is important to all Ontarians but to specific groups of Ontarians in particular: women and immigrant workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise again today in our 10th—are we getting close to our 11th hour of debate? I'm not going to double-count myself as a speaker.

As much as I enjoy being schooled by the party that gave us the 2002 blackout and left us with a \$39-billion stranded debt in hydro, I'm not going to talk about that.

Here's what it comes down to: We all agree that raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do. We all agree the CPI is the right thing to do. There's some other stuff that we don't all agree on. It's not really complicated.

The member from Niagara Falls spoke very well, and from the heart, about how we have to respect people who are earning the minimum wage and in minimum wage jobs, because they find themselves in circumstances that are beyond their control.

I would like to suggest that a sign of respect would be to stop debating something that we all generally agree on and just get it to committee, and then we can discuss it some more. That's simply, I think, a small sign of respect that we can pay to those people who are earning minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the member from Ottawa South, is that a bell I'm hearing? Because you've just been schooled.

When we take a look at that—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I need new writers? Is that what you're suggesting, that I need new writers?

Mr. Todd Smith: They're on minimum wage.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes, they're on minimum wage right now.

Again, when we talk about this whole issue of minimum wage, I think one of the things that we really need to look at too are the stakeholders involved, not just the employees. The stakeholders are the businesses that provide the jobs. Without those businesses that provide jobs, then we don't have employees, and therefore minimum wage can do whatever because we have a decrease in employment figures. Again, we have to take a look at that and take that into consideration.

If we can, in fact, create a healthy environment for businesses to thrive and grow, I think it's important.

Then maybe we don't even have to worry about minimum wage. All of a sudden, we can begin to see how people will begin to thrive, not just survive, in an economy that would then start to turn around.

Of course, Tim Hudak and our PC Party have that million jobs plan. We get mocked about that, but you know what? That plan can work. We have even offered it to the government to help you out, but you don't listen. You never have listened, and you won't listen.

So maybe within a week or two we'll get an opportunity to do a little more schooling. But we'll let the electorate decide that when we take it to the polls of public opinion. We'll give them the opportunity because that's when we can say, "Game on." We'll bring it on.

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, no, not at all.

But it's a pleasure having the opportunity to stand here in the Legislature and debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I kind of like the comment, "Game on." It's an interesting comment. It's too bad that we won't be seeing a lot of games in the NHL this year out of Toronto, but certainly they're moving in the right direction.

I want to talk about small business because our colleagues are talking about small business. Our plan talks about small business, quite frankly. It's the only one that does. Increases in the minimum wage will be accompanied by a reduction in the effective small corporate business tax rate, as follows—and I'd like my colleagues to listen to this because they've raised it a number of times this afternoon, and they haven't said that the NDP had a plan around small business. So I'd appreciate you taking a couple of minutes here to listen: a reduction from 4.5% to 4% as of June 1, 2014—small business; a reduction from 4% to 3.5% on June 1, 2015; a reduction from 3.5% to 3% on June 1, 2016.

I can tell you that during the by-election in my campaign, I went to small businesses. There was a lot of talk around the minimum wage because we all know the minimum wage was brought up in the second week of the by-elections in Niagara Falls and Thornhill. So I went to the wineries, the tourist sector, the hotel owners and the restaurant owners, and they were very clear: They feel that reducing the small business tax will offset their costs on the minimum wage.

Here's a couple of things that are happening: One, I believe that small businesses are happy with what's going on there. The other part of it, which again has been talked about today, is that if you increase the minimum wage, all of a sudden people are going to throw people out of work. The stats don't show that. They don't show it here in the province of Ontario. The Liberal Party, to your credit, raised the minimum wage, and what happened? One hundred and fifty thousand jobs were still created. Those people who were on minimum wage took

that money and spent it right back into their communities. That's reality. That's what—oh, sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's okay. Thank you. I return to the member of the Prince Edwards—Hastings, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the members who have spoken. The member from London West rightly points out that the number of employees on minimum wage has gone up considerably under the Liberal government, from 3.5% to 10% of our workforce in Ontario on minimum wage over the last 10 years.

The member from Ottawa South dutifully read his notes but added a little bit of colour there as well. I appreciate that.

1740

The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex as well, throwing down the gauntlet: "Game on."

To the member from Niagara Falls, who talked about the NDP small business plan but then also congratulated the members of the Liberal government for their work on this—there really isn't a whole lot separating these two parties anymore. We've joked about the fact that there has been a coalition—

Mr. John Yakabuski: An unofficial coalition.

Mr. Todd Smith: —an unofficial coalition. I really look forward to seeing what happens over the coming weeks, because we now know that the budget is going to come down on May 1. The finance minister gave us that little tidbit today, although that was leaked out by the bureaucrats a couple of weeks ago. So we knew that it was going to be May 1.

I am really curious to see what happens on the days following May 1, because as we all know, the NDP have continuously, over the last two and a half years, allowed this Liberal government to live. They've allowed this Liberal government to increase the minimum wage rolls from 3.5% to 10%. They praised them, actually, for what they're doing over there. They continuously support them on their ideas.

What we really need in Ontario is someone with a new plan, someone with a real plan, someone who is going to create a million good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario. That's the PC Party under Tim Hudak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon to discuss Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage, on behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon. This bill is but one of many initiatives rolled out by the Liberal government for the lights and cameras at a press conference, only to then lose its appeal, I suppose, when they had their next big idea they want to showcase.

I spoke this morning of how this government has so many priorities, it's starting to seem like, in fact, they have no priorities at all.

I want to get to Bill 165, but I also want to touch on something that I think is very important to Bill 165 as well as all the bills this government has introduced this

session. What I wanted to mention briefly was something that the member for Nickel Belt said this morning when we were debating Bill 162. The member for Nickel Belt pointed out that this morning we were debating a bill the government introduced on February 24, and here we are debating it for the first time on April 15, less than 10 days shy of two months later. That was this morning, and now here we are, this afternoon, debating Bill 165, which was also introduced in February, on the 25th. To illustrate my point: Too many priorities means no priorities. Back in February, the government introduced two completely different pieces of legislation on back-to-back days, the Monday and the Tuesday, both of which they claimed were milestones and very important. Yet here we are, months later, and the bills are still being debated.

I would venture that a large reason why these bills and others like them are still even before this House is because the Liberal government has zero focus and really doesn't have a clue about any of the important issues facing Ontarians. They have so many bills and only so much time for debate, they can't decide what to schedule because they have no overarching mandate, and everything ends up being dragged along.

All the while, they have no plan and no credibility on important issues like job creation, issues like getting overspending and deficits under control, or even affordable transit. On these issues, this government has demonstrated just how grossly out of touch they are. In fact, just last night, the Minister of Transportation was on the radio boasting about how this Liberal government is going to cut funding on everything from health care to education.

Clearly, this government is running out of steam. Nevertheless, here we are today, debating one of the many Liberal priorities, and that is Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage. Speaker, as the title suggests, Bill 165 seeks to amend Ontario law with regard to the province's minimum wage. This bill was introduced by the then Minister of Labour, and it amends the Employment Standards Act to adjust the minimum wage annually starting in October 2015—October 2015. Even if we stop debating this bill tomorrow or today, it does not take effect until October 2015.

The way that Bill 165 proposes to adjust the minimum wage annually is by indexing it to the Ontario consumer price index, otherwise known as the CPI. These changes to the minimum wage would be rounded to the nearest five cents, and no adjustments would be made if it would result in a decrease in the minimum wage rate.

As things stand today, the general minimum wage stands at \$10.25. This rate will be increased to \$11 per hour effective June 1 of this year. Bill 165 specifically deals with adjusting the minimum wage annually starting in October 2015. Just as a reminder, we are, of course, in April 2014.

An increase that is known and anticipated is something we've heard about from employers, and this is also something that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has supported.

My concern, though, is not so much with Bill 165 as it is with what Bill 165 tells us about the Liberal government's approach to the jobs crisis we are seeing here in Ontario. I know the Premier and the minister and the entire Liberal caucus try their hardest to tell everyone they can that there is no jobs crisis in Ontario, but we here in the PC caucus firmly believe that when you have nearly one million people out of work, no term is more accurate than "jobs crisis."

That is the basis for my concern surrounding Bill 165: again, not so much about what the bill is, but rather more about what the bill is not. What this bill is not is a credible jobs plan. That is what is so concerning. We've lost over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the last 10 years. This Liberal government's record on job creation is, quite frankly, abysmal.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, introduced a bold, credible plan to create one million good jobs in the province of Ontario. It's called the Million Jobs Act. Unfortunately, the Liberal-NDP team voted down that idea. While, yes, the minimum wage is important, and, yes, we need to be mindful of how incredibly difficult it is to get by on minimum wage, the reality is that more minimum wage jobs are not the answer. The government and the third party are focused on giving the people struggling to get by on minimum wage a 75-cent pay increase. The PC caucus, on the other hand, is focusing on getting our economy growing again so that people aren't forced to count on a 75-cent minimum wage increase but rather have good, reliable jobs that they can build a life around. Growing the economy and igniting private sector job creation will do more for those currently working for the minimum wage, because they will have more opportunities to get jobs that pay more than the minimum wage.

The Liberals and the NDP want to raise taxes on businesses and middle-class families through business tax hikes, which will only make it harder for job creators to hire more people. That's not the way to create jobs, and it's not the way to address the ongoing job crisis in our province.

I'll be honest: I know where the government is coming from with Bill 165. I will give the Premier the benefit of the doubt in that I honestly believe she may think that focusing on minimum wage jobs is a good way to create jobs in Ontario. But the thing is, that's not a belief I share.

We hear over and over from the members opposite about how hard it is to live on the minimum wage. This is not news to me. I doubt it's news to any member in this chamber. The fact that nearly one million people are out of work in Ontario and thousands more have no better option than working for the minimum wage is, in itself, a tragedy. But you know what is equally troubling? What is an equal tragedy is that in the face of such dire times, the best this Liberal government can do is stand up and proclaim that "All will be okay because we're going to give you a 75-cent raise."

You know, this bill should really, if anything, be a schedule or a section in a much larger, comprehensive

jobs plan, but it's not. The idea behind Bill 165 is not without merit, and yes, sure, it will provide some minimal relief to those working on minimum wage. But I still can't believe it when I see ministers standing up in this chamber proclaiming their pride at raising the minimum wage 75 cents, while all the while their government has overseen and watched 300,000 manufacturing jobs exit Ontario. How can any one of those ministers express pride when it has been under their government that the Ontario unemployment rate has been above the national average for dozens and dozens of months? This is a government that has presided over Ontario's slide from have to have-not. This is a government that has presided over skyrocketing energy prices that have gotten so bad that businesses are closing and families are missing bills because they just can't afford power in Ontario.

1750

While, yes, I can see the value in Bill 165, and I absolutely feel for those who have no other choice but to have to scrape by on the minimum wage, I would much rather see a government that will actually do something about helping them get off the minimum wage as opposed to being content to give them a 75-cent raise. I would rather see the provincial government focus on kick-starting our economy and creating good, well-paying jobs by:

- (1) Lowering hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses;
- (2) Lowering tax rates and reining in government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years;
- (3) Promoting the skilled trades and lowering apprenticeship ratios—and I might add, abolishing the job-killing Ontario College of Trades;
- (4) Increasing trade with provinces across Canada; and finally
- (5) Eliminating the red tape that forces small and medium-sized business owners to spend time filling out paperwork instead of hiring more employees.

Those are the issues Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are focused on, and that is the plan for more job creation, more economic growth, less minimum wage jobs and more opportunity for all Ontarians.

In closing, I will be supporting Bill 165 and want to see it move to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, Speaker, I listen to the exchanges, and it really amazes me. Here you have a government that complains about being expedient about pushing this bill through and not talking about it so long, yet it's politically advantageous to them to move it ahead. Yet when I've got a bill, or someone on this side has got a bill, like Bill 71 to protect child actors, it sits on the order paper, because the House leaders are playing games and playing checkers with it, when it's an important thing that should be protecting kids.

Why am I complaining about this? Because I think this party with their Christmas tree and this party with some of the other bills they're bringing in—their priorities are screwed up. Their priorities are not for the people and the working people of this province. All I—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to ask the member to exercise caution with respect to his language.

Member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, sorry; I'll withdraw that one word. I guess it was—it's not so bad.

Interjection: Mixed up.

Mr. Paul Miller: A little mixed up—"mixed up," then. We'll change it to "mixed up," Speaker.

The bottom line is, we talk about people who are struggling on minimum wage, yet one party thinks it's going to ruin business. That's nonsense; we've proven the stats. It doesn't ruin business. It actually improves jobs, and they're worried about raising it.

Then we've got another party that says, "Oh well, you can live on 11 bucks an hour." I challenge anyone in this House—anyone—with their lifestyle, to live on \$400 a week. None of them could do it, Speaker, none of them.

The bottom line is, if this place becomes realistic one day and really deals with the things that people in Ontario need, I'm going to be a very happy member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and follow my colleague across the floor, the member from Dufferin–Caledon. I would ask members of the House to allow this bill to move forward.

It's very, very clear that it comes as a result of a consensus that was reached when we asked people from the business community, from the labour community, from the anti-poverty community and youth to come together and give us their best advice after having consulted around the province. They held 10 public consultations around the province. They got more than 400 submissions from around the province as well, Speaker. They came to the conclusion that this would be the best way to move forward to allow the minimum wage in the province of Ontario to become the highest in the land and also to allow it to become fair and to allow it to become predictable for business going into the future.

Interjection: How many times did the Tories raise it?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It seems to me, Speaker, that we have raised it seven times since 2003. I don't believe that the official opposition raised it once during their time.

It's time to move forward. I think that this bill has had good debate. People have expressed their opinions. Surely, it's time to send it on to committee. If it needs to be improved in some way by way of amendment, I think I'd like to see that, but let's move it forward. It's time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 165 today. I want to thank the member from Caledon for

her address today. She's always very reasoned in the way she goes about speaking about legislation, and today was no exception. In fact, that's the second time I heard her speak to a bill today. She spoke to Bill 162, I believe it was, earlier today.

I have a differing view than my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on minimum wage legislation. I disagree with his assertion that raising the minimum wage does not cost jobs. Raising the minimum wage is not a trip out of poverty. The people who live on minimum wage are the very people who are affected the most when there's a little increase at the grocery store or a little increase at the convenience store or a little increase at the gas station. They're the ones who are affected most whenever there is an inflationary effect in our economy. Whatever little increase you give them in minimum wage will be eaten up immediately by the rise in the cost of living, so they actually accomplish nothing, other than the politicizing of the wage issue.

The economy and the natural evolution of the needs of the economy are what should drive wages where they need to be, at all levels. However, this government believes that the politically expedient thing to do is to get involved in that sphere. I know they backed off; they were talking about going to \$14 an hour, and even they realized the effect it would have. You can't argue that it would have a bad effect at \$14 but has no effect at a smaller increment. The effect is smaller, but it is still there, and I think that the government just likes to play politics with minimum wage rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to congratulate the member from Dufferin–Caledon on her contributions to the debate on Bill 165.

There are a lot of people in the riding of London–Fanshawe. They're hard-working people, and there are a lot of people who are struggling with minimum wage jobs. There are a lot of single mothers in my riding who are looking forward to having the minimum wage salary amount, per hour, increase. We need to do things like that in this House in order to make sure that people do have some type of relief. It's certainly not the best scenario if you have a full-time minimum wage job and you're trying to support a family, whether you're two parents and a child or one parent and a child. But the fact is that I

don't recall hearing any solutions or suggestions from the Conservative Party with regard to what some of their proposals are for minimum wage.

The NDP has certainly contributed very productively to this debate, and we'll continue to contribute productively in committee. There have been a few things thrown out, and they're kind of fear statements about how it's going to ruin small business. We took that into consideration, and we are going to be lowering corporate tax rates for small businesses by 0.5% over the two years; I think it's three times that we're going to be lowering it. It's going to go from 4.5%; at the end of 2016, it will come down to 3%. That is a reasonable way to gradually get small businesses looking at the higher minimum wage so that they're not going to be crippled and have that job loss. We're doing the responsible thing—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Sensible.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There: I just heard a member say that it's called "sensible." We are the sensible party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The member from London–Fanshawe is looking for some solutions. I'm happy to offer them. Take them, use them, run with them.

(1) Lower hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses.

(2) Lower taxes and rein in government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years. That, by the way, is when you guys have been in power.

(3) Promote the skilled trades, lower apprenticeship ratios, and abolish the job-killing Ontario College of Trades.

(4) Increase trade with provinces across Canada.

(5) Eliminate red tape that forces small- and medium-sized business owners to spend time filling out paperwork instead of hiring more employees.

Ultimately, I think we all understand that the job creators in this province are the people who build this province, and they are the private sector.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Wednesday 16 April 2014

Mercredi 16 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to steal the water from my leader here this morning.

Interjection: Wait until we tell him. You're going to get sued.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do not report me. I hope I don't get sued, because the way this place is going—it is a pleasure to speak to the bill—you can get sued for just about anything, which brings me to Bill 83.

I want to thank the former Attorney General, Mr. Gerretsen, for introducing this bill. Then, he decided he was going to leave the carriage of it to others to carry through. I respect that, because John is not running for re-election, but he's had a tremendous career here, and I've enjoyed the discussions we've had over the years and I've enjoyed his friendship as well. I wish him the very, very best.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm not leaving yet.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know he's not leaving yet—but we're hoping it's soon, John. We're hoping it's soon. I don't mean that in a personal way; I mean that in a collective way, for the good of the province of Ontario.

But it is interesting; this anti-SLAPP legislation, as it's colloquially known, is designed to protect people from being sued by the large and the great and the powerful, in

order to silence them so that they will be afraid to challenge what the large and the great and the powerful are doing. But it is somewhat ironic that we are now in the midst of exactly that. The government introduces a bill to protect people from lawsuits, and what does the Premier do herself, but lodges a lawsuit against the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Mario Sergio: It's not quite the same.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend, the minister responsible for seniors—

Hon. Mario Sergio: Go ahead. I heard what you said about me yesterday.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It wasn't about you personally, Mario. That was about any one of the ministers over there. They're not responsible for anything. Mario, you shouldn't take things personally—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's get control. You're not talking to him, you're talking to me, and you're not using names, you're using titles. Let's just all stay focused. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Very good. I say to the minister not to take things personally in this forum because it's not the way that it was intended; however, people can choose to take things any way they want. Apparently, the Premier takes things very personally when she's criticized.

Since 1867, when this Parliament first convened, it has been the practice of the opposition to oppose and to be critical of the actions of the government; to be critical of members of said governments, since John Sandfield Macdonald to today, Premier Wynne. That is the job of the opposition. It is not necessarily the desire alone—it's not just the desire of the opposition; it is the job of the opposition. We are appointed and elected to do so.

In fact, when we look across the way here and we look at the eagle up above the government benches, it is a reminder to us to have our eyes open, to be vigilant, and to ensure that we are not afraid to criticize and to challenge the government if we see fit.

On the other side, you'll see the owl—

Interruption.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was the owl, Speaker. That was the owl. Thank you very much.

And it behooves the government to use wisdom.

Now some people would ask, "Is the Premier of the day being wise, when she doesn't like what someone on the opposition says, to immediately go into the realm of the courts to try to extract"—I don't want to say "revenge"; that's a strong word. But to extract—

Interjection: Revenge.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, okay, in a minor way. She wants to silence that criticism. She wants to silence that criticism.

Now if this law—I guess the question would be, and I know that the Speaker is wondering if I'm speaking to the bill, and I most certainly am—if Bill 83 was passed—and that's something that we'll have to debate further, I suppose—would it, in fact, prevent the Premier from doing exactly what she's doing?

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition and my colleague from Nepean—Carleton were served with further papers suing them for \$2 million each for hurting the Premier's feelings.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Hurting the Premier's feelings: \$2 million.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know. So I would have thought the Premier would have thought her feelings were worth more than \$2 million, but in this day in age that's what she went for—\$2 million.

But what it does is, it sends a terrible message to each and every member of the opposition side here today, and each and every member out there in the public that may seek office in this chamber, that may seek to be elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

They're going to ask themselves, "Will I be elected?" If the answer to that is a positive one: "Will I be elected on the government side, or will I be elected on the opposition side? If I'm elected on the government side, will I have the wisdom to be able to make those decisions that whether something is said critically is, in fact, a reason to challenge what the opposition said?"—which you have the automatic opportunity every day to challenge what the opposition says—"Or will I be elected on the opposition side, and will I be subjected to a suit from the government side every time I'm critical of the government?" That's a difficult conundrum to be placed in.

You are armed in politics. If you run for elected office and you're elected, you should have already put on that suit of armour; it's called a thick skin. If you have that in politics, you will probably last much longer than those who don't have it.

I say to the Premier: Develop a thick skin so that we can get on with the job of doing what is best for the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario are not served by having barbs thrown back and forth in the Toronto Star or the Globe and Mail or the National Post or any of the newspapers, or Global News or CBC or whatever. They are served by government getting down to the business of doing what is best for the people of the province of Ontario.

0910

Now, we're going to have a budget here on May 1. The minister announced yesterday that the budget would come down May 1. I'm looking forward to that date, because that is going to bring this chamber to a moment of truth, to a moment of decision. There is going to have to be some consideration made. I say to my friends in the third party—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Which one?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I always speak to you, Rosie; you're first on my list when I'm speaking to the third party. So they are going to have to quickly make a decision: Are we going to support and enable this government to continue to do the damage they've been doing to the province of Ontario over the past 10 years, or are we going to say, "It's time, Premier. I hope you have a thick skin for the campaign, but it's time to go to the people and seek a mandate?"

You see, Kathleen Wynne has been the leader of the Liberal Party for a year and three months, going on four. It is the tradition in this place for someone who is unelected and has never sought a mandate from the people, within the first year or very soon after, to put their name forward and say to the people, "I am willing to offer my services. You've seen me for the past several months. You've seen how I act. You've seen what I do. You've seen how I sue. You've seen what I do and you've seen how I sue. Now I want to offer you my services to be Premier for the next four years. I'm giving you, the people, the ultimate authority in the province of Ontario, the opportunity to pass judgment on my leadership and my premiership." That's the thing to do.

We'll have the opportunity with the budget. If the NDP decide they want to prop up the government once again, maybe it's time for Kathleen Wynne to say, "It's time to pull the plug myself and get a mandate from the people."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It's always interesting to listen to the member opposite articulate his perspective. I appreciated the architectural tour. That was interesting. I'll be forever reminded now of the eagle at my back as we soar to new heights and do what we need to do to protect the people of the province.

I want to speak to the bill, because it speaks very well to some of the things happening in Ontario, particularly around developments, when someone has got a legitimate issue that needs some adjudication around things like the OMB and stuff like that, where you can sometimes, based on the size of your wallet, do things that mitigate negatively to the common folk who have a right to protect their interests. What this bill doesn't do is allow anybody to libel somebody else deliberately, and in some cases perhaps even maliciously. I don't think anybody around here would ever want to do anything like that, but we do have to try to do what we can to protect all our citizens from being harmed when someone utters a terminological inexactitude. That's not a good thing to utter anywhere. Mom used to always say, "Always tell the truth. Then you don't have to remember what you said." I thought that was wise.

I want to congratulate the member for his comments, and the architectural tour in particular. That was the most fascinating part of what he shared.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I, too, enjoyed my colleague's remarks this morning. For folks in the galleries, it was a bit of an architectural history lesson. If they've not already heard, they did get that today.

I want to just provide some brief comments. I know I'll have a further opportunity later on, but I think it's important. I'm going to reference a recent summary judgment update that talks about a recent Supreme Court ruling. It was put together by Cassels Brock and recently published, on January 23, so it's some updated information when it comes to this. I'll just reference it.

"The Supreme Court of Canada"—back in early January—"released a much-anticipated decision in *Hryniak v. Mauldin* ... that calls for greater access to affordable, timely and just adjudication of claims." This case "addresses amendments to Ontario's summary judgment rule made in 2010, and the subsequent interpretation of that amended rule by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Combined Air Mechanical Services Inc. v. Flesch*" in 2011.

"The court signalled that, in light of the increasing complexity and expense associated with trials, a shift in culture was necessary to allow more cases to be determined by motion for summary judgment. This shift is intended to reflect the 'modern reality' of civil litigation and entails 'simplifying pre-trial procedures and moving the emphasis away from the conventional trial in favour of proportional procedures tailored to the needs of the particular case.'"

Just in summary, this decision "signals what will likely be a substantial shift in the adjudication and resolution of claims in Ontario. Courts are likely to see an increase in the number of summary judgment motions, and we can only hope that litigants will see a corresponding increase in the number of judgments from summary judgment motions."

I would reference this judgment ruling by the Supreme Court back in January as an update to anti-SLAPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments on Bill 83, which is the Protection of Public Participation Act, or, as it's often referred to, the anti-SLAPP act.

I think it's important that we distinguish between libel, when someone knowingly says something that is false about one person, and the purpose of this anti-SLAPP legislation, where you typically have a group of citizens who are talking about something that's in the public interest, perhaps an environmental issue in a community or a planning issue in a community, and the group of citizens comes together to speak out against the environmental issue or the planning issue, and then a corporation hits the citizens' group with a lawsuit. This is what this is meant to prevent, which is big corporations going after citizens' groups that have a legitimate interest in bringing an issue to the attention of the public.

I think it's clear, what the focus is on this. I think it's clear that this is a bill that is meant to protect the right of citizens to speak out on issues.

I think it's also clear—I think we've already had over nine and a half hours of debate on this issue. I think it's time that we move this along to committee, where we can make any refinements that are necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand in support of my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because, in short, this legislation provides a method for judges to dismiss SLAPP lawsuits. This is a good idea, because the time has come where we can't let bullying tactics squelch, if you will, the voice of people who are trying to stand up in the best interests of the public.

When I say that, I can't help but think about Esther Wrightman. Esther is from Lambton county. Specifically, she lives near Kerwood, Ontario, in Adelaide township, which is going to be home to some significant development from NextEra.

Esther is right in the middle of a wind project that is subjecting her to a number of concerns—environmental, health, economic; the list could go on. And so, as she raised her voice and spoke on behalf of people who are so frustrated with the manner that the Liberal green energy scheme has failed and has let huge corporations run roughshod, if you will, all over rural Ontario—guess what?—this part-time employee of a local nursery near Kerwood, and a mother of two, has been hit with a lawsuit. Essentially, NextEra is bullying her to cease and desist in terms of how she is communicating her angst, her concern over environmental health and economic issues associated with the failed Liberal green energy scheme, and it is not right.

0920

I am so glad, because this is important: With this legislation, if the judge determines that the lawsuit itself was brought in bad faith, damages can be awarded to the defendant as the judge deems appropriate.

We have to enable our people to freely stand up and speak on behalf of the public and their self-interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank all the members for their comments on my 10-minute speech. I was kind of shocked that it was only 10 minutes this morning, but I guess the bill has rolled into the 10-minute sections.

I maintain my general message on the sad irony that we're talking about this bill on the very day following that the Premier serves my leader, Tim Hudak, and my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, with \$2-million lawsuits for hurting her feelings.

Anyway, there are mixed messages on this bill as well. I also have lots of people calling me and saying, "You can't support this bill." For example, people in the forestry business are very concerned about having vexatious lawsuits levelled against them to prevent them from doing their job in harvesting trees. You can't build anything in this country without harvesting trees, but there are people out there who believe that we can somehow build buildings out of plastic and maybe straws or

something, or maybe hay; I don't know what they think. The reality is, you've got to harvest trees in order to build things, including the desks that we do our work on here, Speaker.

There are people who have concerns about this legislation and it giving the opportunity to a lot of people who love to try to prevent people from doing their jobs, to institute vexatious suits themselves.

There are two views on this. I hope that we can get this bill to committee so we can hear from all of the stakeholders out there on both sides of the argument, so that when the bill does pass, we've got the most responsible and common-sense piece of legislation possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to add to the debate on Bill 83, the anti-SLAPP bill.

It will be quite interesting and ironic if the first-ever use of this legislation would be from the Leader of the Opposition and my colleague from Nepean—Carleton in their upcoming suit and statement of claim by the Premier of the province. It would be quite ironic if they get the opportunity to exercise this in the coming times.

It's good to see the Attorney General in the House, listening to the debate today. I think this is an important piece of legislation. I think it is important for the Attorney General to hear the different comments and perspectives from around the House.

I want to begin by saying that this anti-SLAPP legislation, I believe, is a necessary function out of the dysfunction of our present system. We often see, in this House, legislation that comes forward that really, in essence, puts a bandage on a problem. We do have problems in our legal system—it's getting difficult to even call it a justice system these days. Even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Beverley McLachlin, has, on many occasions, written and spoken about the dysfunction of our legal system.

I view Bill 83 as one of those bandages that doesn't really look at the root problems that are happening in our legal system, but as some way to try to minimize or mitigate the faults and the failings that we see in our legal system. There's a host of them, but I think we can all recognize some very problematic functions of the system: the high costs for people to seek remedies or to defend against actions, the necessity and the inability for people to defend themselves, always requiring others to advocate on their behalf. This legislation, Bill 83, is one of those bandages to try to minimize the dysfunction.

Another one is the prompt payment legislation that's in the House right now as well. If we had a good, solid, functioning legal system, we would not need to have that prompt payment legislation as well, but contractors are finding difficulty in seeking remedy and finding remedy in the courts.

Mr. Speaker, I have a direct and personal story on this anti-SLAPP legislation which I think is important, and I'd like to share it with the House and with the Attorney General. Back in 2004, before I became elected, a resident of a township in Lanark county—his name is Dr.

Don Page, and people from the third party would maybe recognize his name. He was a long-time member of the NDP, and he ran unsuccessfully for the NDP. He lived in Montague township, and across the road from him there was a tragic fire with fatalities. Don Page lived next door and immediately went to the assistance—did manage to help save the family dog, but there were fatalities in that fire.

Don spoke out and was critical of local government about their response, and the fire department's response, to that fire. In due course—in very short course—the township of Montague laid a defamation suit against Don Page.

Really, Speaker, and for the Attorney General, that was a case where the local government of the day felt uncomfortable with the criticisms of one of their residents and thought a \$50,000 defamation suit would suffice to shut Don Page up.

That was in 2004; the case was finally settled in 2006. At the time, I headed up a local organization called the Lanark Landowners Association, and we raised a substantial amount of money to assist Don and his wife in their defence. They're pensioners and of modest means, and there was no way that they could afford to adequately defend themselves. The system is so broken that for laypersons to defend themselves is really impractical and not effective.

We did raise some money, enough to hire a lawyer for Don, and the judge eventually—actually, by the time it did get to court, the first hearing in court, the judge threw the case out. It was interesting what the judge said in his decision: "In a free and democratic system, every citizen must be guaranteed the right to freedom of expression about issues relating to a government as an absolute privilege, without threat of a civil action for defamation being initiated against them by that government." That was Justice Kenneth Pedlar of the Ontario Superior Court, in his decision about Dr. Don Page. He did go on to say that those members of council who felt that there was a defamation could do so as individuals, but not as part of the government of Montague township.

0930

It was also interesting—and I think this is something that we have to recognize—that sometimes remedies are not immediate and sometimes they may not be apparent. That was the decision in 2006. Shortly thereafter, there was a municipal election in Montague, and four of the five elected positions on that council were not elected in the next round of elections; four of the five were replaced by other people. So there was another remedy that was not so quick, that was not so apparent, but people saw that there was an abuse by that government, by that local government, against one of their own residents, and they took action. They couldn't take action in the courts, but they could take action in that court of public opinion and express themselves.

I would like the Attorney General to think about some of the other problems within the legal system that we could fix or streamline and make more effective so that further pieces of legislation such as Bill 83 and such as

the Prompt Payment Act would not have to come before the House, so that we could actually have a legal system that we could refer to as a justice system that provides remedies, that provides protection and defence by individuals against those people with deeper pockets. How thick your wallet is and how deep your pockets ought not to be the measurement of legal success in this province. I think we can make significant strides in this Legislature bringing forth reforms and amendments to our legal system that actually attack the root of the problems and not just apply more layers of bandages and allow that root, that open gash, that problem to persist and to continue.

I know that Don Page was not the only person who has been affected in that manner. There have been many, many people, and it is a duty and an obligation of us to assist our residents and common, everyday people so that they can find protection and remedy in the courts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and I, in some respects, commend him for his work with the Ontario Landowners, giving voice to people. It's like anything else, though; I think it's about finding the proper balance in these things.

The right of the individual to freedom of speech, of course, does not include saying anything you want. There is some responsibility for the things you say—libellous statements and that. Regardless of what side of the issue, whether it's wind turbines or landfill sites or a power plant, whatever—you name it—there's the proponent, who's always viewed to be the bad guy. We saw that in BC in the referendum this past weekend with respect to the pipeline to get Alberta crude to the coast. These are contentious issues, and I think that the rights of people need to be respected. This bill does somewhat go in that direction, but the federal courts have recently made rulings, and the federal government as well has made some changes.

There is a balance that is trying to be found. We can't stall the complete economy of the world, whether it's what's going on in China with rare earth metals or what's going on in other places. We should look to our own ability to resolve disputes. This bill does talk to that, and I've had calls on both sides of the issue.

As the member said, in my riding, he would know that there are several issues. One is the turbine; it's actually an issue. And there's another one: It's a transformer station—both of which I've spoken to Minister Bradley about to try to find a resolution locally as opposed to a legal dispute that's going to cost everybody, including the government, more money.

You should never take on the government, whether it's expropriating highways on the 407 or building a transformer station, because the government is going fight you with your own tax money. So be reasonable. The government, as well as the proponents themselves, need to listen to the concerns of people and find ways of reasonable dispute resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm happy to stand here and add a few comments to the previous speaker.

I listened to him very carefully outlining a particular situation. I don't think any of us disagree with him that such situations do occur on a day-to-day basis throughout the province, but this particular bill, Bill 83, has been debated for well over nine and a half hours. To my best guess, there are probably 50 or so members of this Legislature who have spoken to the bill, and I think we all agree on the problems described by everyone who has spoken in the past.

As a former member of city council, I'm totally aware of situations like this. I clearly see that this bill is a move in the right direction. I would encourage all members to allow the bill to go to committee, where it could be debated and amended, if necessary. But at least let's get the business of government done as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to stand today to talk about my colleague's comments on this piece of legislation.

No citizen in Ontario, indeed, in Canada, should be afraid to speak out about something. This anti-SLAPP legislation will help with that. I brought a resolution to the House a month or so ago concerning joint and several liability, which is a similar situation where municipalities are getting very frightened of being sued for actions that they had no control over.

I liked the comments by my colleague here. The way the justice system is set up these days, if you don't have a lot of money, you can't fight these things. It's very difficult. They'll take your house and whatever else you'll have to sell in order to fight these things. It's not fair. We need to have some control over lawsuits in general in Ontario and, certainly, this will help out.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: This government loves lawsuits.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, we see that this government does like lawsuits.

I would suggest that this go to committee. It could be improved in some ways. There are those who speak out against it. It was mentioned that the forestry system has some real concerns about this, and I can understand what their concerns are.

However, it seems that those with the deepest pockets seem to win a lot of these things, either because their lawyer is a little bit better or perhaps people just don't want to get involved because they don't want to lose everything they've got fighting for something that, probably, they were right in saying in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for his comments. He understands that improvements do need to be made to Bill 83.

I'd just like the echo the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, and as well, the member from Perth—Wellington just mentioned that it should get to committee. That's where we can make the amendments that are necessary so that we can bring this forward. As the member from Scarborough—Rouge River said, over nine and a half hours of debate, over 50 speakers: I think it's time that we move the bill to committee, do what we need to do and move it forward. It's a good piece of legislation for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll make a few comments for the members from Scarborough—Rouge River, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Perth—Wellington and Durham.

0940

I don't know how I can express my disdain for the members on the government side suggesting that debate ought to be cut off, that debate ought to be finished on this important piece of legislation. I understand that we want it to be in committee, but before it gets to committee, it should be ventilated well by debate in this House. Indeed, the very essence of safeguarding the public interest is debate within this Legislature. Without debate, there cannot be any safeguard of the public interest. Here we have two members of this government who are saying, "We've had enough. We've heard enough." Well, I can tell you that they didn't hear the story about Don Page before. They didn't hear those stories, and I think those stories are important to hear.

There's no time in the committee to hear those stories. We've all been in those committees. We have a rapid-fire, 10-minute introduction and presentation by people. There's very little time to ventilate and explore those concepts in detail.

I do want this government to recognize that there are those failings. This is one little bandage on a very significant problem in our legal system. It's an important bandage. I would like the Attorney General to start looking and seeing and exploring if there are other avenues we can use to actually fix the problems that we've all talked about in this House so that we get to the point where there is no longer a need for more and more bandages on the system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, because this is a very important issue. This bill will amend the Courts of Justice Act to create a process to determine if a lawsuit is a SLAPP—strategic litigation against public participation—and to dismiss it accordingly. I think that's the important part of it all, so that someone can look at it and stop this from happening. This would ensure that the time and resources of the court system aren't wasted with these lawsuits. But more importantly, it would help to ensure free speech.

Ontario should not allow strategic lawsuits to be used in an effort to shut down debate. Our democratic system

depends on public participation, from voting to petitions to the ability of the people to speak freely about their ideas and their concerns. It's important that the voices of our people are heard.

Community participation is essential. For instance, in my riding of Oxford, we have a great number of individuals and groups who are very concerned about a proposed landfill in Beachville, near Ingersoll. We are concerned about the danger to our drinking water. It is important that we all have the ability to raise that concern publicly. The volunteers with these organizations in the community have done a great job holding events, creating petitions, launching letter-writing campaigns, appearing at town hall council and much more. They've expressed their concerns through news releases, letters to the editor, Twitter and Facebook, and that is a right they should have. They need to be free to communicate with the rest of the community, their elected representatives and the government without fear of a lawsuit, whether that communication is direct or through the media.

I do want to make it clear that this company has not interfered with that in any way, but it would be easy for another company in the same position to use their resources to launch a lawsuit against community groups and try to intimidate them or to bankrupt them into silence.

Unfortunately, in other communities, developers have tried to do just that. When I was deputy mayor in south-west Oxford, our entire council was hit with a strategic lawsuit for voting to continue fighting against a landfill site. It was pretty clear that it wasn't a serious lawsuit when even the member of council who had voted against the continuation was named in the lawsuit, but it didn't prevent the developers of the landfill site from launching the lawsuit.

I know from working with the groups in my riding that they're all volunteers. They are working in their spare time to protect our community, and our drinking water, and I want to commend them for that. This is not something that they do professionally. They are people with full-time jobs, retired people, and stay-at-home moms who have become leaders because they are concerned about our community and the safety of our water.

I also know from working with them how limited their resources are and how difficult it would be if they are faced with a lawsuit. We need to ensure that companies with a lot of resources aren't allowed to silence community groups simply because they don't like what they are saying.

It's not just the community organizations themselves that face financial threat from these lawsuits. Individuals who are named have to worry about their families and their homes. They may face huge legal costs to fight the lawsuit even though there isn't any merit to it. Strategic lawsuits are simply meant to bully and intimidate someone into staying quiet.

Members on all sides of this Legislature said they are against bullying, and yet we now see a lawsuit being used just for that. Mr. Speaker, I don't think we can have a full discussion about this bill and the impact of strategic law-

suits without discussing the situation that has developed in this Legislature. As we all know, several weeks ago the Premier threatened the Leader of the Opposition with a lawsuit if he did not cease his comments and questions about her involvement in the wiping of computer hard drives in the Premier's office. Yesterday, it was announced that she is suing him for \$2 million.

Bill 83 was created based on the recommendation of the Attorney General's Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. According to that report, "Strategic litigation against public participation ... has been defined as a lawsuit initiated against one or more individuals or groups that speak out or take a position on an issue of public interest. SLAPPs use the court system to limit the effectiveness of the opposing party's speech or conduct. SLAPPs ... intimidate opponents, deplete their resources, reduce their ability to participate in public affairs, and deter others from participating in discussion on matters of public interest." Mr. Speaker, based on that definition, it appears the Premier's lawsuit is, in fact, strategic litigation against public participation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, member for Mississauga—Streetsville?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I refer the Speaker to standing order 23(g), paragraphs (i) and (ii), which constrain the member from referring to a "matter that is the subject of a proceeding ... that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination...."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You may need it if I decide to throw somebody. Order. Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the standing orders of this Legislature direct members not to refer their comments to matters that are in fact the subject of a legal proceeding, and what the member has made mention of is, in every respect, a matter that is the subject of a legal proceeding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I'm going take a five-minute break and decide on your request as a point of order.

Clerk?

The House recessed from 0948 to 0950.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Be seated.

In reference to the point of order by the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, it is true that what he had quoted is in the legislation; however, at the end of the legislation it says, "where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

It's my opinion that the member wasn't doing that, and he may continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, can we have some of the time back that the member opposite used? Ten minutes is a fairly short period of time to speak.

Interjections.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It was running all the time you stood up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You didn't lose any time, apparently, when I called the five minutes. Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I know the members on the other side of the House are not happy that I'm raising this issue, but it is directly related to this bill. It's an example of exactly the type of lawsuit that this bill is supposed to deal with: a lawsuit meant to intimidate, a lawsuit meant to make someone keep quiet.

Members of the Legislature are protected from lawsuits when speaking in this chamber. Why should that change when they can use the same reference and take it outside the chamber? I don't believe a member of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I know you're not happy with it, but at least let him have his day in court, so to speak. Thank you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that the Premier has chosen a lawsuit which is so contrary to the very bill that her government introduced and that we are debating here today. I hope that if it passes, this bill will help prevent that type of lawsuit in the future.

It takes courage to continue to speak out in the public interest despite the threat of litigation, whether it is concerns about a local development or questioning an individual's involvement in deleting information on gas plants. I want to commend the Leader of the Opposition for his courage in not being intimidated by the threat of a strategic lawsuit. I want to commend him for putting the interests of the people of Ontario first, and I want to commend him for continuing to work to raise the questions in spite of the threat of litigation.

But it is not a situation that we should be putting the people into. We want an Ontario where people feel free to speak about their concerns. We want an Ontario where people can talk about issues of public interest. We want an Ontario where the Premier doesn't sue the Leader of the Opposition. We should be able to have a free and open debate. We should be able to put forward our ideas, opinions and beliefs without threats of bullying. As the Attorney General said when he introduced this bill, "I think all members will agree that one of the greatest things about living in a fair and democratic society like Ontario's is that we can speak out on matters that are important to us, sometimes having a difference in opinion and issues that we express from time to time." I want to thank him for that.

Mr. Speaker, it is not enough for this government to just say people should be able to speak out, or even to introduce this bill to limit the impact of strategic litigation. To have a conversation, you have to be willing to listen to those who disagree, not just to intimidate them into keeping quiet. To govern, you need to listen to the people even if you don't like what they are saying. Our political system works because we in the opposition ask questions, and because we point out where the government missed the mark, where the government failed. It is what our constituents sent the opposition to Queen's Park to do.

They sent the government here to do a job too. They wanted you to focus on creating jobs and strengthening our economy, to protect health care and education. Instead, you have chosen to focus on a lawsuit.

Instead of talking to their lawyers, the members on the other side should listen to what the people are saying. Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, we've had nine and a half hours and 50 speakers. It's time to approve the bill. I hope that everybody agrees with that and we move on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I commend my colleague from Oxford and show great respect for his determination to bring a reasonable opinion on an interesting matter, on Bill 83. I would say he comes with a great deal of experience, as a former mayor, a former minister of the crown, and a valuable asset in Ontario.

What he was saying, in fairness, is that you shouldn't use your power and influence to predetermine outcomes of disputes. I think what we're clearly struggling with this morning is the balance that's needed to make sure that we aren't just a natural barrier to progress in Ontario, which affects everyone from young people to older people.

But we see that going on across Ontario now quite regularly, where the government is sort of forging ahead with a plan that's a failed plan in many respects, particularly the energy file. They have completely messed the file up with Bill 150, and I would say the former minister, George Smitherman, started the whole fiasco.

With the Minister of the Environment here today—there's an issue in my riding. I just think it's a matter of courtesy, and a matter of listening, to resolve many disputes. The transformer station in my riding—I think when they have these public information centres, they are strictly a way of mollifying people, just deflecting them so they don't get a cause and any motion behind their cause. They just go ahead and bully, basically, the outcome. Because when you have a big company like Hydro One against four or five little settlers around an area, and they're going to infringe on their environment, they should take the time, listen to their concerns and address their concerns in a reasonable manner. They've had to hire a consultant. Actually, they're looking at hiring a lawyer now, to take on a decision made by the minister. I'm not part of that dissent. It has been poorly managed by poor GR and public relations—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and it's that simple. They could have solved it without all this fuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, we have consensus on this bill that should go to committee. I certainly support it going to committee at the earliest opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to comment on it very briefly. I understand that the SLAPP legislation—a lot of it began with some demands from the people on the project around Big Bay Point on Lake Simcoe. That's where a lot of the people were basically scared off because of the threat of lawsuits. We completely understand that. There has definitely been some movement over the last few years to create what we call SLAPP legislation.

I know we've had a substantial amount of debate on it, and it will go to committee. I'm sure we're going to hear from all kinds of people, whether it's in the development industry or environmental industry or whatever it may be, either supporting or opposing or, in some cases, amending the bill as well. I think that that's one of the reasons we felt that it should get to committee in the first place and why we enjoy the debate on it, so we have this opportunity.

I do think it's really ironic that we are debating this bill this week, when the leader of the official opposition and our critic have been slapped with a lawsuit, simply because they're trying to voice their concerns. Our job is, we're the official opposition. We are to oppose things we see wrong with the government.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, what I'm hearing in my riding, and what I've heard in a number of visits across the province, is people are telling our party to keep it up, to keep the fight up.

The Premier may have thought she has scared everybody off with this. The reality is, she has kind of opened up a hornet's nest, because people across the province want to know what's going on with those power plants. They want to know what her involvement is. I think she made a really big blunder by putting out that libel suit against Tim Hudak and Lisa MacLeod.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Durham and Simcoe North for their comments. I also want to thank the minister responsible for seniors and the Minister of the Environment for their comments. I agree with them that the bill should go to committee and have further debate, but that doesn't mean we should cut the debate short in here.

Obviously, from the noise we heard from the governing party as I was making my presentation, it was quite obvious that I was saying things that they hadn't heard before and that had some impact on them. So I guess maybe more debate needs to be had, because there's more to be heard.

Because he took two minutes to bring out his point of order to you, Mr. Speaker, and the clock was running during the time that he was making his point of order, there were parts of my presentation I couldn't get in.

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I want to tell you this: The Attorney General's Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel found that many people had been intimidated into silence by strategic lawsuits. Their report

said “Many also knew of others who had been sued, or who had refrained from participating in public questions either because they had received a warning that they risked being sued if they did speak out, or because they were afraid of being sued in any event.” The point I was making in my presentation was that in fact that’s what the present situation seems to be, in this House: Every time we hear another step being taken, we say, “But if only they didn’t bother us and say these things anymore, then we would drop the lawsuit.” It seems to me that’s a SLAPP by any name you want to call it. That’s why it’s so important that if they’re going to introduce legislation, they don’t introduce it just so they can bring it forward, send it to committee and we won’t see it again until after they’re through with trying to intimidate and bully the opposition. I take great exception with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Hon. John Milloy: I’m pleased today to talk on Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act. As members are aware, it proposes a made-in-Ontario solution that would allow courts to quickly identify and deal with strategic lawsuits to prevent the unwarranted silencing of critics and minimize the time and resources wasted by plaintiffs, defendants and the courts on meritless crimes.

I just want to provide some context to how we got here this morning. The bill was introduced on June 4, 2013, and has seen significant debate here in the House. Over 56 members of the Legislature, by my count, have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. The bill has been debated, I’m now told, for some 10 hours over the past seven months. Listening to the debate, it’s been clear that the majority of this House is in support of this bill. Yet the official opposition is intent on continuing debate, and their only goal is to delay. The official opposition has been putting up speaker after speaker. Surely this signals there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill.

I believe it is time that this bill passes second reading and be sent to committee, where the real work takes place. In committee, members of all parties will hear from all stakeholders that have an interest in this bill. In committee, members will have an opportunity to move amendments to strengthen the bill. At the same time, this House can move on to debate other substantive matters. As members are aware, there are a number of pieces of important legislation already introduced, which the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process. We can’t devote the necessary time to these important matters if we’re forced to continue debating this bill—for example, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, the Ontario Immigration Act, the keeping Ontario’s roads safe act, and I can go on.

Mr. Speaker, we’d like to spend time debating these pieces of legislation, but we can’t until Bill 83 is dealt with. As a result, I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The government House leader has moved that the question now be put. It is up to the discretion of the Speaker to either allow this to happen or not. I am allowing the motion to go forward.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I didn’t hear a no.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, we will defer this until after the proceedings—yes.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

I believe the ayes have it. This will be deferred to this morning after question period.

Vote deferred.

STRONGER WORKPLACES FOR A STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L’AMÉLIORATION DU LIEU DE TRAVAIL AU SERVICE D’UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 19, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / *Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l’emploi et la main-d’œuvre.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe when the debate ended, Mr. Natyshak, the member from Essex, had the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my colleagues who are in the House.

Before I begin, I haven’t had the opportunity to extend my condolences and sympathies to my colleagues in the PC caucus. I know today is a sombre day for you, who are friends and colleagues of Mr. Flaherty and Christine. I just want to extend my sympathies to you.

Bill 146 is titled the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act. It has several provisions that change some regulations as well as make changes to the Employment Standards Act. We see these changes as a small, minor, but essentially positive step forward to close some of the loopholes in Ontario’s labour statutes.

I’ll go through some of the provisions. Firstly, the bill replaces the current six-month cap on back wages in section 111 of the Employment Standards Act with a two-year limit, while—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are seven sidebars going on. I can’t even hear the member from Essex. If you really want to have a meaningful discussion, I suggest you go through those doors at the back.

Continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. The first provision that I'd like to talk about is the extended damages provision.

The bill replaces the current six-month cap on back wages in section 111 with a two-year limit, extending the limit in which you can pursue back wages while also removing the \$10,000 cap on damages for unpaid wages. These changes will allow workers to recover a greater proportion of their actual lost wages when employers have violated the Employment Standards Act over an extended period of time.

Let me just work that through: Imagine, as a worker or particularly a young worker—through reviewing this bill, I see a lot of it is focused on young workers and vulnerable workers. So imagine you are in that type of position where you're owed more than \$10,000 in damages, and you have not had the ability or capacity to recover, or to even start to pursue the ability to recover, those back wages past six months. Well, you're out of luck, as it currently stands in the province of Ontario.

When we see this type of change to the Employment Standards Act, we certainly see it in a positive light. I don't think it could be argued by anyone in this House that workers shouldn't have the ability to pursue all of the back wages that they are owed, and rightfully owed, and also to have a flexible amount of time to be able to figure out how to do that, to receive counsel, either through legal counsel or through a whole host of workers' advocacy groups that exist, that are out there to support vulnerable workers, and I'd certainly like to give them a shout-out today. The workers' action centres that exist in our communities all across the province—the folks at the Windsor workers' action committee do great work on behalf of unrepresented or unorganized workers, mainly new immigrants to Canada and to Ontario, and also younger workers, who don't necessarily know their rights and the Employment Standards Act fully.

We see this first provision, the extended damages provision, as something that certainly is a step towards enhanced fairness in our Employment Standards Act as well as something that really can't be argued against in good conscience in this House.

Secondly, another provision is the new temp agency record-keeping and joint and several liability for temp agency workers. I don't know if there is a more contentious issue, at least in my riding, than the prominence of temp agencies and the real explosion that we've seen in terms of temp agencies in our communities. They have, by and large, replaced a lot of the more traditional labour supply mechanisms that we were used to.

No longer do you open up the newspaper in the classifieds and see a whole host of job postings, as we did previously. Temp agencies are pretty much the go-to for companies to seek out temporary labour, and they certainly do that. They do that sometimes in a way that is necessary but, most often, it is access to quick and underpaid or undervalued labour.

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It's a really contentious issue in my riding, where I hear stories of people who get a job through a temp

agency, work for 89 days—they hit that 89-day limit—and then are let go, released. The obligations and liabilities on behalf of the company are not there. They're simply thrown back on to the unemployment line. We don't think that's necessarily a productive way to stimulate your economy or to have a stable workforce. It's been quite detrimental to many of our communities, and there's been an explosion there.

The bill specifically imposes new rules on temp agencies. It creates new record-keeping responsibilities for temp agencies to track and record every hour worked by a worker and to retain those records for three years. It also introduces the concept of joint and several liability. In the case of employees sent to work for an employer by a temp agency, this would seem to make sense since, from the employee's perspective, it doesn't matter which business is responsible for the wages as long as one of them ultimately is. In practice, this law will cause employers that use temp agencies to make clear arrangements as to which one of them will be responsible for Employment Standards Act compliance.

Now, of course, this is an issue. There are some grey areas within the contractual obligations as to who enforces the Employment Standards Act, who is responsible upon the injury of a worker and who is responsible for training that worker. We would think that certainly both entities that are engaged in the oversight or the sponsoring of that worker should be held responsible and have some liability.

This provision adds that to our Employment Standards Act to bring both sides to the table and to make it clear prior to that worker actually starting their employment as to who is ultimately responsible, whether it is the temp agency or the employer.

Number three is a new information disclosure requirement, meaning posters and self-audits. It requires distribution of the employment standards poster to every employee, and it adds another tool: the employer self-audit. The self-audit is an interesting wrinkle. It gives the employment standards branch the power to order an employer to conduct a self-audit of its records to determine if it is in compliance with the act or regulations. The employer must conduct the audit and report its findings to the employment standards office.

I think the idea and the concept behind the information disclosure requirements and self-audits is to give us a clearer understanding of the labour market and, in particular, how many employers are actually using temp agencies and what the nature of their work is. As I stated, are they suffering from being hired for very, very short periods and intermittent periods? Are they actually fulfilling their obligations under the Employment Standards Act? And is it very clear as to what the responsibilities are to workers who are given employment through temp agencies?

We think that could be a productive and valuable asset to the ministry, to us as legislators and to those who are in the business of enforcing the Employment Standards Act.

Number four, it introduces new protection for foreign nationals working in Ontario. Protections for live-in

caregivers in the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act are extended to other foreign nationals working or looking for work in Ontario, such as temporary foreign workers. Again, we think that certainly works. That being said, stronger action on this specific provision could have been taken. For example, the proposal in Bill 146 to extend the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act to all migrant workers would provide some protection, but its effectiveness would be limited because it relies on employee complaints rather than proactive enforcement. The act could have included a comprehensive public registry and licensing system for all employers and recruiters, similar to what is in place in Manitoba.

I certainly will make those recommendations if this bill ever does get to committee, and I would hope that we would be able to review some of the other clauses that have been put in place in other jurisdictions that do have maybe a stronger effect in protecting those vulnerable workers who—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank the member from Essex. Due to the fact that it's 10:15, we will continue the debate at another time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Debra Lacoste and friends here today to see page captain Nicholas Lacoste, from the great riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, in action. She is in the members' gallery along with her friends. Welcome to Queen's Park and good luck, Nicholas.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's absolutely my delight to welcome to the House this morning folk from a great school, City View Alternative. We've got James Bryers, who's a teacher; Sapphire Newman; Tessa Hill; Luca Soldovieri; Gwendolyn Elbourne; Edwin Huang; and Murley Herrle-Fanning, all here to witness what goes on this morning.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Gillian Unger, mother of page Samantha Unger, her aunt Honey Unger and her brother Spencer Unger. Today, Samantha is a page captain. Welcome.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the students from the Islamic Foundation, from Scarborough-Rouge River. They're sitting in the gallery above us. They're here to observe question period and to enjoy the day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Each day, as we sit through the justice committee and

reread the OPP ITO, it becomes more clear that Premier Wynne could have either been complicit in or ignorant of the alleged destruction of email documents over the \$1.1-billion cancelled gas plants.

Here are the indisputable facts: She co-chaired the campaign that cancelled them. As a member of cabinet, she signed the contract. She said that the cancellation cost \$40 million when it cost \$1.1 billion. The global password for Peter Faist was open well into her transition and, as the OPP said, it was immediate; it was between February 6 and March 20. Her assistant, Brianna Ames, had her computer wiped after February 11. And Peter Faist worked for her up until two weeks ago.

The secretary of cabinet told us that she could have launched an internal investigation into this. Why didn't she? Is she afraid of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just say, as I have said before in this House and before committee, that I have taken responsibility for mistakes that were made around the relocation of the gas plants.

When I came into this job, I knew that there needed to be an opening up of the process. I asked the Auditor General to look at the situation. We opened up the scope of the committee. I have appeared before the committee twice. We have put hundreds of thousands of pages of documents in front of the committee. We've changed the rules around the retention of documents.

We have opened up the process. It's very clear that the allegations that are in front of the public at this point are about the former Premier's former chief of staff, whom I did not direct and who was not part of my staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's convenient, to talk about the one individual where there is an OPP ITO. But we do know other information; I listed it in a chronological way, in an orderly manner.

But the cabinet secretary appeared yesterday at the justice committee, and he said that he and this Premier spoke about passwords for the former Premier's computers. He also said that he spoke with Monique Smith, the former transition chair for Ms. Wynne.

Given that the OPP say the transition happened immediately, she and her transition team would have noticed, after they gained access to those passwords, that the hard drives were wiped.

So I ask the Premier one more time: Given what we know—that you knowingly withheld information from this assembly on the \$40 million—how are we supposed to believe you now, and why didn't you hold a probe into this matter? Is it because you and Monique Smith know a little too much and you're afraid of it coming out?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader will want to comment on what was or

was not said at committee yesterday. But let me just say, on the issue around the passwords—and this is important—that the member opposite has her facts completely wrong again.

On May 7 last year, the justice committee asked for all gas plant documents in the Premier's office. On May 21, my office delivered 30,000 documents, and here is what my chief of staff wrote to the committee, which the member would have seen:

"I am writing on behalf of the Office of the Premier in response to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on May 7, 2013....

"[O]n May 9, we were advised by Cabinet Office IT that the email accounts of 52 individuals formerly employed"—formerly employed—"in the Premier's office could be accessed. A search of those accounts was conducted by my office and any available records, applicable to the committee's motion, have been included. I have enclosed with this letter a list of the 52 individuals."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The facts speak for themselves. I sat in committee; the Premier didn't. The secretary of cabinet told us yesterday that he spoke with the Premier about the passwords for the former Premier's office. He said that he raised red flags with her transition chair, Monique Smith. One of her staff, as I indicated yesterday, had her computer wiped. Another one, who did the wiping, remained on payroll with the Liberal Party up until three weeks ago.

No one believes the Premier on this. She said in this House that it was a \$40-million price tag. It's a \$1.1-billion price tag. She can sue the Leader of the Opposition, and she can try to sue me, but she can't sue the truth. It will come out.

Again, I ask her—and not the third-rate Herb Gray from Dollarama; I'm asking her—will you tell us why you have not decided to call an internal probe? Or will you call a judicial inquiry, barring that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I insulted him. I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You're ahead of me. Now we're going to do it properly. Would the member please withdraw?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Leeds—Grenville will withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to try to finish this round by indicating to you that, on both sides, while questions are being put—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait until I have the attention of the people who I need to hear this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait. Thank you.

While the question is being put, I'm hearing heckling from one side, and when the answer is being put, I'm hearing heckling from the same side.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. John Milloy: If I can begin, I just want to say that I am very, very proud to be compared to the Right Honourable Herb Gray, a man of great integrity and an outstanding public servant. The honourable members across the way can compare me to him any day of the week.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Mr. Wallace's third appearance at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. He made a number of things clear. First, he confirmed that it was the chief of staff to the former Premier who requested the access codes. He confirmed that had he known Mr. Livingston was serious about the request, he would have taken very different steps. He confirmed that the public service's response to committee document requests was done in good faith. And most importantly, Mr. Wallace confirmed that he had not briefed Premier Wynne on the deletion or destruction of emails from the former Premier's office. He confirmed that he did not brief Premier Wynne's transition team.

1040

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier.

Last week at question period, I stood here and said, "Many of your cabinet ministers stood in this House and said one thing about the gas plants, knowing the complete opposite to be true...." You stood up and told the Legislature that what I said wasn't true.

Well, Premier, minister after minister stood and said, "You have all the documents," but we didn't have all the documents.

Other ministers, including you, told us the total cost of cancellation was \$40 million, but the Auditor General told us it was \$1.1 billion.

Premier, you're telling the Legislature one thing when the complete opposite is true. We bring the facts to this House; you say they're wrong. Why are you perpetrating false allegations?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I am not. What I am doing is I am answering the questions that have been asked of me.

All of the members opposite know this: When I came into this office, I knew there were unanswered questions about the relocation of the gas plants. I knew that we needed to provide documentation in response to com-

mittee requests. That is what we have done, Mr. Speaker—hundreds of thousands of pages of documents. The committee has had the ability to call dozens of people before it and to ask questions and to have the answers from those people.

We knew the process needed to be opened up; during my leadership campaign, I said that I was going to do that. I have done that.

There is now an independent OPP investigation under way. We need to let that investigation unfold, and the committee will continue to do its work.

I hope at some point the committee will be able to write a report. I look forward to that. In the meantime, they have their work—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, Premier, there are so many scandals, so little time.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, and the member from Nepean—Carleton dig deeper into your scandal, and you try to silence them. The member from Aurora has done a remarkable job of exposing your Ornge air ambulance scandal, and you point fingers instead of answering questions. The member from Barrie has exposed the financial scandal unfolding over the Pan Am Games. I bring the truth about our finances to the Legislature, and you accuse me. Whenever a member of the PC caucus presents more of the facts and brings the truth forward, you lash out with personal attacks and make false accusations.

What are you afraid of, Premier? What are you hiding?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually have a profound respect for the way this House should operate. I have a profound respect for the role of the official opposition and for the third party.

Mr. Speaker, had I believed that there wasn't a need for more openness, then during my leadership run I wouldn't have proposed that we open up the process. I knew that there were questions being asked that needed to be answered. That's why we opened up the process.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely my belief that the opposition and the third party have a very important role to play in terms of shining a light on issues that are of importance to the people of Ontario. But in every case, I believe that dealing with facts and dealing with evidence is what their modus operandi should be.

I am interested in debate; I want there to be debate. I want there to be healthy debate based on facts.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You continue to say, "We made mistakes." Well, Premier, there's no mistake. This was

all done by design. The gas plant scandal documents proved you signed the go-ahead for Project Vapour. It was your signature that approved a blank cheque in order to reach a deal. Your signature moved the gas plant from the public court to private arbitration—this was to keep the result secret. Then you told us it was only \$40 million because you buried most of the costs in the hydro bill. It took the Auditor General to show us the extra billion dollars owed by the taxpayer.

Premier, how can you continue to pretend you know nothing of the gas plant cancellation when it was you and you alone who started the whole process?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, we have to deal with facts. The fact is that I was part of a cabinet—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that I was part of a cabinet that took collective action to implement a promise that had been made by all parties. That's the fact.

I just want to use an example. When we talk about mistakes that were made, here's a mistake that I think was made. I believe that in the initial decision around relocating the gas plants, placing the gas plants where they were and then relocating them, the community was not consulted, was not taken into account in the way that it should have been. There was not a process that engaged community and allowed for that input. We've changed the rules so that that can't happen again, so that communities will be involved. That's what I mean by learning from past experience.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, described the plan to bring in outside Liberal operatives to destroy computer records as "stupid." He told the committee that, when it came to political record-keeping, it was the incoming Premier's responsibility to check with her predecessor.

Did the Premier ever talk to Dalton McGuinty about email deletions, computer wiping or record-keeping and, if so, what did he tell her?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, the allegations on those issues that have been made were made about a staff person, the former chief of staff, of the former Premier. I learned of the nature of those allegations at the same time that she did. I've been very clear that the person against whom the allegations are laid never worked for me and was not part of my staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, when Dalton McGuinty left office, there was a blaze of publicity around hidden documents, deleted emails and possible contempt of the Legislature. It's pretty hard to imagine that this wasn't a top-of-mind issue for pretty much everyone. Did

the Premier's chief of staff discuss record-keeping in the Premier's office with David Livingston and, if so, what did he learn?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here was what was top of mind on this issue for me when I came into this office: How are we going to open up this process so that we can make sure the documents that are being asked for, the questions that are being asked are going to be answered?

We talked about how do we open up the scope of the committee. We talked about whether we should ask the Auditor General to look at the situation. We did that. We opened up the scope of the committee.

So it was top of mind, and as I've said many times today, yesterday and before, in my leadership run, I knew that we needed to open up this process. That's what I've done, that's the commitment I made and that's exactly what I followed through on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the Premier is trying to be a little bit deliberately obtuse here.

The Premier served with Dalton McGuinty for over a decade. She was his campaign co-chair. She signed off on the gas plant decisions and pledged to uphold the legacy of Dalton. Is she seriously claiming that no one on her team asked basic questions about the scandal that chased Dalton McGuinty from office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The preamble to that question basically says I was part of a government and I was part of a cabinet that took action on a promise that had been made by every party in this House. We implemented the relocation of the gas plants, which was a promise that was made by all parties. I have said that's the case. I was part of that cabinet. We did act on that, because the initial process of locating those gas plants was not what it should have been. The community was not consulted in the way that it should have been, Mr. Speaker. There needed to be a different process.

1050

Two things on my mind when I came into this office: We need to open up the process and make sure that the questions that are being asked about the relocation get answered; we did that. The second thing was, we need to change the process going forward, and that is what we have done.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Peter Wallace told the Standing Committee on Justice Policy that he began talks with Monique Smith, the head of the Premier's transition team, on January 22, before David Livingston asked for a pass-word to wipe computers in the Premier's office. He said they discussed the situation with the gas plant scandal.

What steps did the Premier's transition team take to ensure records would actually be protected?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, again, I think what I will do is quote what the secretary of cabinet said yester-

day at committee. He was asked by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, "Did you provide updates to anyone not perhaps in the Premier's office, to any minister's office or anyone affiliated with any of the ministers?" Peter Wallace said, "No, I did not."

Mr. Speaker, I know that the leader of the third party knows that during the transition period, we were very engaged in getting ready for going forward with governing. She knows that because my staff were meeting with her staff. We were working to set up the committee, as I said in answer to previous questions. It was top of my mind that we open up a process that would allow the questions that were being asked to be answered. That's what we did. I made that commitment and followed through on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The secretary of cabinet told the gas plants committee that one of the things he raised with Monique Smith was record retention. I quote: "So we had broad conversations around the issues in front of the Legislature; about document production by the public service; about the absence of document production by others...."

Now, can the Premier tell us what the head of her transition team relayed to her about this conversation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to the committee process yesterday. But just let me say this: The leader of the third party knows that we have changed the rules around document retention in my office. We have trained the staff to know what to retain and what not to retain.

So, again, it was very much my concern that we put in place the structures and the rules to make sure this situation did not arise again, whether it was the initial situation of the location of the gas plants or the way documentation was dealt with. We changed the rules. We've made it clear what those rules are, and in the process of doing that have provided the information that has been asked for by the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier continues to claim that she's as surprised as anyone by the allegations, investigations and wasted billion dollars. But the people stuck paying the bill for this mess know that she's not just an average citizen. She sat at the cabinet table. She headed up the campaign team. She signed off on the gas plant cancellations. She and her team were briefed on what was going on.

Why won't the Premier simply tell us what she was told and when?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, that member was the leader of the party that made the exact same promise going into the last election and fails to provide us with the costing and the work that she did.

But let's talk about what Mr. Wallace said in front of the committee yesterday. Two important points: In terms

of his discussions with the transition team, "We did not express any advice with respect to the management of political records or the hard drives or the emails associated with the former Premier's office." That was his discussion with the transition team.

But what is equally important is that Mr. Wallace, in his testimony, spoke about the commitment of the current Premier to make sure that necessary documents, documents that had been requested, would be provided to the appropriate legislative committees, and that she made openness part of her hallmark as she became Premier: another important point that Mr. Wallace made yesterday.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, following up on my questions from yesterday about possible illegal Liberal donations, the Toronto Sun has reportedly been speaking with Mr. Barry about what you said was a clerical error since October. During this time, no adjustments have been made in the official records at Elections Ontario, and none of the seven Liberal entities, including your chief of staff or your Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, have returned any of the nearly \$11,000 in potentially illegal donations.

Premier, a true clerical error does not occur multiple times over multiple years and does not occur in donations totalling nearly \$11,000. Premier, was it because James Barry was illegally funnelling money to your Liberal Party that you decided to reward him with an appointment to the board of governors for the College of Trades, or was there another reason?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't think the answer changes from yesterday. The rules surrounding political donations are obviously a very important part of the democratic process. We need to make sure that those rules are in place. My understanding is that Elections Ontario has been asked to look at some questions about some particular donations. My understanding is that that process is ongoing. Of course we'll work with Elections Ontario if they have any questions. That is what I said yesterday, and it stands today. We will work with Elections Ontario as they undergo this investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: You can spin this all you like, but the facts remain. Seven Liberal entities, including your chief of staff and your Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, have accepted nearly \$11,000 in potentially illegal donations, violating the Election Finances Act. Premier, this is not a clerical error. James Barry is a key public figure and heads the IBEW, a key donor to both the Liberal Party and the largest single donor to the Working Families Coalition. This organization has top-notch legal advice and has a sound understanding of Ontario election law because, as

you know, they use its loopholes to fund the Ontario Liberal Party.

Premier, is it because James Barry's IBEW is funding the Working Families Coalition that you have refused to take the necessary steps to remove him from the board of governors at the Ontario College of Trades, or are you protecting him for yet another reason?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, College and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: All we have here is, a complaint was made to Elections Ontario. Elections Ontario is looking into the complaint. The person and the organization that Elections Ontario is looking into has said that there was a clerical error. The member refers to that as something else because he obviously has more information than he's telling us, because Elections Ontario is looking into this matter right now.

I think we have to also correct the fact—because he should know better than this: James Barry is not a political appointment. Those appointments are made by the appointments council of the Ontario College of Trades. They appoint him to the position on the board of governors there. It's not a government appointment whatsoever.

I suggest that when the member gets up to slur other people's reputations, that he at least—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Every time it seemed there was a chance to get answers, the Premier seemed to be looking the other way. She claims she didn't learn about the allegations of computer wiping until March 27, even though members of her staff had their computers wiped a year and a half ago. She never asked the secretary of cabinet for a briefing on email deletions. She claims she has never seen the report on the internal government investigation into computer wiping.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment, second time. The Minister for Rural Affairs, second time.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This raises the question: Is the Premier more interested in getting answers or advancing her own deniability?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

1100

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for his question. He's pointing out exactly what we're saying over here: that it was a former member of the former Premier's staff, Mr. Livingston, who is the topic of the

investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police, and that the current Premier was not involved.

I'll remind him of his words yesterday in front of the committee. This is what the member said to Mr. Wallace about his interactions with Mr. Livingston: "In making your decision ... were there any points in time where you had contact with or you provided updates to information to anyone in the current Premier's office?"

Mr. Wallace: "No."

"Did you provide updates to anyone not perhaps in the Premier's office, to any minister's office or anyone affiliated with" any in the minister's office?

Mr. Wallace: "No, I did not."

Mr. Speaker, this is a police investigation about Mr. Livingston. These are serious accusations; they are unfounded. We should allow the OPP to do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's exactly the problem: Getting answers on \$1.1-billion scandals means asking the tough questions. The Premier claims she wanted to fix the problem that led to the actions that the secretary of cabinet called "potentially criminally stupid."

How does the Premier expect to fix the problems if she won't ask the tough questions: how \$1.1 billion was wasted and how key information was destroyed?

Hon. John Milloy: Let's go right back to the beginning: There were 21 gas plants that were sited in the province of Ontario. Two of them were done in error; there were mistakes made about where they sited. Every single party in this House said it was a mistake and that they would cancel those were they elected in government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it was this Premier who opened up the process, who helped facilitate the provision of hundreds of thousands of documents to legislative committees. I can tell you that as House leader I received direction that we have as broad a committee as possible, with broad powers and scope. It has been this Premier who has been looking forward and finding out ways that these types of mistakes will not happen again so that the proper siting of power plants happens in the future.

FLOODING

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I think everyone in this House would agree that it has been a very long winter, but the sun is shining, and spring has actually arrived.

That means that several small and rural municipalities across Ontario need to be on watch for potential flooding caused by rapidly melting snow and/or heavy rainfall. Just last Thursday in eastern Ontario, the city of Belleville declared a state of emergency due to high water levels. Just yesterday the municipality of Centre Hastings and the municipality of Tweed also declared states of emergency.

Can the minister tell the House about the current situation in Belleville and in the municipalities of Centre Hastings and Tweed, including the efforts that are under way to assist these communities?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the question. Indeed, flood season is upon us and the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management is ready to respond to any potential emergency and prepared to provide assistance when it is needed.

The office has been in contact with affected and potentially affected communities. Unfortunately, as the member mentioned, we all know that Belleville has been hit hard with high water levels since last week due to the spring melt and precipitation. The Moira River has overflowed, affecting approximately 70 homes thus far.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the people of Belleville. So far, they have handled the situation locally, bringing forward over 500 volunteers to sandbag affected homes. This demonstrates determination, compassion and resilience.

Both Centre Hastings and Tweed have declared emergencies on a precautionary basis as well. The emergency management field officer has been in touch with these communities, and we are working with them to offer any assistance and advice that we can provide as a ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for the update. It's good to know that the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management is prepared to respond to any emergency and able to assist when needed.

Like Belleville, Centre Hastings and Tweed, many communities across Ontario, unfortunately, may face the exact same situation. Rapid flooding can cause severe property damage and threaten the lives of several Ontarians. To avoid risk, it is always best to be prepared and be ready to act when facing a situation like this.

Once again, can the minister tell us what information is important to share with those living in communities across our ridings and how they need to prepare ahead of a potential spring flooding season?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to assure the member and all members that we will continue, of course, to work with local communities to ensure that they have all the assistance they need.

I had the opportunity yesterday to speak with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings as well, and I gave him my personal assurance that we will be there working along with him, in his community, to make sure that the communities are protected and they have the assistance they need.

Speaker, we all have a personal responsibility when it comes to making sure that we are prepared for these types of emergencies. We are expected to prepare to take care of ourselves and our families for a minimum of 72 hours.

Being prepared is a three-step process: Make a plan, build an emergency kit, and be informed. I encourage everybody to go to emergencymanagementontario.ca for more information.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Earlier this week, a renewable energy approval was issued for Jericho Wind Inc., a project owned by NextEra Canada, clearing the way for building 92 new turbines in the municipality of Lambton Shores.

But this isn't the only new approval. Over and above that, in February, an ERT dismissed the appeal of the Kerwood Wind Inc. project, approving 37 new turbines in the county of Middlesex. Also in February, another ERT dismissed an appeal of the K2 Wind project in Huron county, approving 140 turbines. This is happening at the same time as European jurisdictions are abandoning wind projects because they don't work.

Ontario does not need the power. The soaring costs of electricity are making living in Ontario unaffordable.

Minister, in light of all this, why do you keep approving new turbines?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for Huron-Bruce, but her information tends to be somewhat inaccurate. These are existing contracts that have been awarded to proponents, and she is suggesting that we ought to have cancelled those projects. She is suggesting that we cancel them all, the same as one of her other colleagues suggested, at a risk of \$20 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They say we shouldn't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just as soon as I get quiet, someone decides to—now he is warned, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Again.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, the member is basically saying that we should cancel existing contracts. Cancel contracts? Have you heard those words before over there?

We have examined the proposal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: I will withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Greenville will come to order. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex will come to order. The member from Huron-Bruce will come to order. The member from Northumberland-Quinte West will come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Leader of the Opposition introduced a bill that would give the Minister of Energy, under his government, the right to cancel 255 renewable contracts—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, your Liberal government cancelled two gas plants to save seats in the last election, but you refuse to listen to the people of Ontario on wind energy. You refuse to listen to the facts. You refuse to follow the lead of other jurisdictions around the world that are abandoning expensive wind projects.

Minister, when will you do the right thing and implement an immediate moratorium on industrial wind turbines? When are you going to do this?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the opposition party, through various members, including the leader, continues to suggest—not only suggest, but introduce legislation that would give the minister the authority to cancel—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the opposition, I decline to say anything else.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday the minister implied that she had no role to play in addressing the over-prescribing of antipsychotic drugs to seniors in our long-term-care homes; it was not herself, but physicians who did the prescribing. She said this in spite of a 2007 report from the Auditor General directing her ministry to address this issue, and in spite of evidence that the province and the government need to do a better job caring for people with dementia.

1110

My question is simple: Does the minister still think that the problem lies solely with our physicians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to clarify that, in fact, that is not what I said. I would happily share the transcripts from the scrum that indicated that we are all in this together. We all have a role to play.

Long-term-care homes are where many of our loved ones end their lives. We want the very, very best care for them. We really are making progress when it comes to providing non-pharmaceutical care for people, particularly through Behavioural Supports Ontario; I'd be happy to talk more about that.

We've also established three centres of learning and innovation—one at Bruyère in Ottawa, one at Schlegel in Kitchener-Waterloo and one here at Baycrest in Toronto—where various research projects are under way, one of them specifically dealing with the appropriate use of pharmaceuticals when it comes to behaviour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The reality is that the use of antipsychotics as chemical restraints is not because physicians don't know better; it is because of systemic problems. The minister is in charge of our health care system; therefore, she is the one in charge of fixing the problem, not failing our seniors.

It is deeply concerning that the minister would rather point fingers than take a leadership role and face this growing crisis. Can the minister tell Ontarians what it is going to take? Or, as some people say, how many people will need to die before she accepts responsibility for this issue and takes a leadership role?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I accept full responsibility, and we collectively are working within the health care system to deal with this issue. Let me give you a couple of examples of Behavioural Supports Ontario having demonstrated results. In one home, behavioural incidents have dropped by 75%, with a decrease of 90% to 95% in physical injuries to staff, due to Behavioural Supports Ontario.

One resident would start screaming loudly randomly throughout the day, which was very distressing for him, for residents and for staff. The BSO team, through behaviour mapping, identified that he really liked Cheezies and Coke, but he wasn't able to verbalize that that's what he wanted before he got angry. So, any time he gets agitated, they now offer him Cheezies and Coke. His outbreaks have been virtually eliminated, through non-drugs.

There are many, many success stories that do not involve those drugs, and we are working to bring those throughout the health care system.

TOWING INDUSTRY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, to live in Mississauga is to spend a lot of time on the road in one's car, and that's why it's not surprising that—

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Oh, sorry. My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. To live in Mississauga is to spend a lot of time on the road in one's car, and I get my share of complaints from constituents: everything from potholes to auto insurance to tow truck issues.

Therefore, Minister, I was happy to hear that you have tabled new legislation to bring greater consumer protection to drivers in Ontario by addressing some of the many concerns that have been raised over the years with regard to towing services. As has been pointed out in the past, this sector also plays a role in perpetuating auto fraud, which leads to higher insurance rates.

Minister, can you please share with the House how this legislation is going to help my constituents?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for this great question. There was tons of discussion about this item yesterday and today in the media.

We have nine million licensed drivers in Ontario who are concerned about insurance rates, and the member is

quite right in stating that fraud in the auto insurance industry is one of the reasons for high insurance rates for drivers in Ontario.

Our Bill 189, the Roadside Assistance Protection Act, intends to address concerns that towing operators contribute to the inflation of rates. There are stories of unscrupulous operators taking advantage of stranded drivers, stories of steering claimants to particular storage and body shop organizations, and stories of motorists' vehicles being towed to a location 20, 30 or even 50 kilometres away. Drivers involved in traffic collisions or in need of roadside assistance should feel confident that the tow truck operator will be treating them fairly, and that is what our legislation will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. As a member with one of the major 400-series highways running through my riding, I hear on a repeated basis concerns and issues with tow trucks and their operators on our highways, specifically what happens when a car is being towed and after it has been towed. That is why I was pleased to hear that there will now be specific legislation to address the issues that my residents and others have raised.

It's really important to ensure drivers are aware of their rights and that they know what to expect when their vehicle is being towed, as it is a moment of vulnerability, especially if it is after an accident. Unfortunately, this moment of vulnerability is also an opportunity for those with unscrupulous intentions to take advantage of stranded drivers.

Minister, can you please share how Bill 189 will ensure drivers and operators are better protected?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: There are about 1,200 towing operators in Ontario and 3,000 tow truck drivers. Most of them provide good service. They keep our roads free and clear by removing vehicles, including those involved in collisions, and they do it in a timely manner. However, there are concerns, and Bill 189 intends to bring clarity and accountability to the towing industry so Ontario drivers are better protected and safer on our roads.

This legislation, if passed, would do numerous things. First, it would amend the Highway Traffic Act to require all tow truck drivers in Ontario to register under the Ministry of Transportation's commercial vehicle operator's registration system. They are currently not registered. The legislation would also require disclosure and the tow truck drivers to obtain approval from consumers before charging for towing and storage services. Prices would have to be posted—itemized invoices. Alternative payments, not just cash, would be required, as would access to towed vehicle contents. This will strengthen consumer protection in Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Premier.

On March 6, I hand-delivered a letter to you and your Minister of Infrastructure, as well as the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, asking all of you to review a proposal by Georgian College to invest in the relocation of the Marine Emergency Duties training program to the Owen Sound campus. This investment would be a key source of jobs for the communities and region that depend on the marine industry.

Premier, will you invest in the education sector, in jobs and in rural Ontario, and commit to providing funding to this valuable program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I apologize. I was speaking to one of his colleagues when he started the question, but I heard the last part of it.

The investments that we have made in post-secondary education in rural Ontario and urban Ontario are unprecedented. We have been there for our post-secondary students. We have been there for our post-secondary students in the north. When you look at the program expansions we have seen and the work we have done with universities like Lakehead and Laurentian and others, when you look at the work we have done with our colleges in terms of outreach, and when we look at some of the outreach that those institutions are doing throughout rural Ontario to encourage young people to get access to post-secondary education, it's not by accident that we have increased access to post-secondary education by 161,000 students.

I'll say more about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: My question will again go back to the Premier. Sadly, none of the four had the time to actually respond to me. And I was talking about the Owen Sound campus.

Premier, in your BLT leaked budget, it suggests you are prepared to provide 3.5 million public dollars to a private firm called Cisco, yet you have given no such support to a public institution; that is, Georgian College. If this particular training program does not receive your help to move to Owen Sound, there is widespread concern you will, in fact, drive the marine industry out of Ontario to the east and west coasts.

It's a fact: The relocation of the Marine Emergency Duties training centre and program to the Owen Sound campus is a no-brainer and will ensure jobs remain in Ontario, as well as the future of the campus in Owen Sound. Premier, once again, will you commit to supporting what is in the public interest and invest in moving the Marine Emergency Duties training program to Georgian College in Owen Sound?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The responsibility for determining course and program offerings for students across this province comes from our colleges and universities. No government has done better than we have in terms of meeting that demand. That's why we've seen 161,000 new students gain access to our post-secondary system right across this province. You know, that is the largest

increase in students in any 10-year period in the history of this province, including when Bill Davis set up the college programs.

1120

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work with our post-secondary partners as they bring forward ideas in terms of better meeting the needs of our students and better meeting the needs of our economy. We are working towards differentiation within our post-secondary system, which is a first, to ensure we can do an even better job of doing that.

But he is going to have to do his work with Georgian College, and Georgian College will then approach us with course-offering proposals.

THUNDER BAY GENERATING STATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Northerners, like all Ontarians, will be paying through the nose for the Liberal \$1.1 billion gas plant scandal. To add insult to injury, a government that reneged on a promise to convert the Thunder Bay generating station to natural gas is now refusing to allocate sufficient biomass supply to enable the plant to provide the energy that Thunder Bay needs.

Does the government have any plan whatsoever to ensure that Thunder Bay residents and businesses have the energy they critically need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've heard this question about 15 times. About two or three weeks ago, we arranged a meeting with the Ontario Power Authority and other people from the provincial government with all of the members of the committee who wanted to come. Mr. Speaker, they got answers to all their questions. They went away reasonably satisfied. They agreed to have an additional meeting.

I want to read a quote from Scott Travers, president of the Society of Energy Professionals: "This is great news for northern Ontarians and demonstrates the foresight of the Wynne government. The biomass conversion will save jobs and provide clean energy. In the longer-term, it also means that Ontario will be able to see the benefits of its mineral wealth through development of the Ring of Fire."

Mr. Speaker, it was the right decision when we made it; it's the right decision today. I think the leader of the third party should get her facts straight.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister, I stand, you sit.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Experts have criticized the recent government announcement for a partial biomass conversion of the Thunder Bay generating station. They say that the biomass supply approved so far is too small to supply the energy required by northwestern Ontario, even in the short term, never mind the energy needs flowing from future mining developments.

Why was the government willing to waste \$1.1 billion to hold on to their political power instead of the power needs of northwestern Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I have been working very closely with my colleagues from Thunder Bay, both Ministers Mauro and Gravelle. We have arranged meetings with the committee, the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator. They had all the technical people in the room. All the technical information indicated it was the right decision. It's very doable.

And on top of it, Thunder Bay is the last coal generation in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question?

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Ontario's small and rural communities have many unique and diverse challenges when it comes to economic development and small business growth—places like Schomberg, Nobleton and Vandonor, in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

There are currently a number of programs designed to assist rural municipalities with these challenges, including the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. One program that was very popular in my community was the Rural Economic Development Program.

We cannot stand by and do nothing while other jurisdictions are competing for jobs. We need to give our local municipalities funding to help them grow their local economy.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Rural Affairs, what action are you taking to support our rural communities?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my colleague, the hard-working member from Oak Ridges–Markham, for her question this morning. A short time ago—it seems like just a few months ago—I had the opportunity to be with her to tour the Markham Fair to take a look at what's going on in that wonderful community. Ensuring that rural communities are able to attract good jobs and grow is the top priority for me and my ministry.

The Rural Economic Development Program is paying great dividends. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$167 million in 468 RED projects, creating more than \$1.2 billion in economic activity and, more importantly, creating more than 35,000 good-paying jobs throughout rural Ontario.

The RED Program supports high-value, low-cost projects, which are the foundation of building good jobs and prosperity in rural Ontario. They show off innovation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes. You'd better sit down.

Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister, for your response. The Rural Economic Development Program has a strong record of job creation and economic growth, one that many municipalities are familiar with, including those in my riding.

I know the Rural Economic Development funding has enabled an innovative partnership between four companies in Woodbridge and Markham that have strong roots in rural Ontario. But recently, Mr. Speaker, we have heard criticisms from across the floor on Rural Economic Development application guidelines. Through you to the Minister of Rural Affairs: Could the minister please clarify how Rural Economic Development Program guidelines benefit rural Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for her supplementary question.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've always believed that you stand on the shoulders of others, so when I became the Minister of Rural Affairs, I looked at the great work that was done by the member from Oxford when he was the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I simply followed his guidelines in terms of the RED Program to make sure that the eligibility he established would be applied through the RED programs that I note.

When the wonderful member from Oxford was the minister, he provided RED funding to the city of London, the city of Ottawa, the city of Hamilton, the city of Cornwall and the city of Toronto. He did so because there were agricultural entities in those communities that were buying products for the surrounding rural areas. It was a good decision back then; it's a good decision today. We'll keep investing in rural Ontario.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in my hand I'm holding a letter from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association that threatens its members with a loss of benefits if they volunteer as a firefighter in another municipality.

The letter ignores the vital role that double-hatters play in providing leadership, training and expertise to volunteer forces serving in rural communities. Instead, it narrowly focuses on the provincial union's constitution, which can be used to dismiss and punish full-time firefighters who dare to volunteer where they're needed the most.

Minister, do you have a plan in place to ensure rural municipalities can keep double-hatters volunteering in their communities, or will you just continue to stand by and watch more firefighters walk off the job?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the question and I give my word to the member opposite that I look forward to working with him on the issue he is raising. I have not seen the letter that he's referring to, but I can say with definite confidence that we on this side of the House—and I'm sure all members—respect the work that firefighters do every single day.

In my role as Minister of Labour and now in my current role as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I've had ample opportunity to spend time with our firefighters, be they professional firefighters or volunteer firefighters, to appreciate the work they do, day in and day out. When there is a fire in our community, as we're all rushing out, they're the ones who are rushing in that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —circumstances, saving lives every single day. We salute them and we thank them for the work they do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the minister: I'll send the letter over with a page for your viewing.

As you know, the safety of rural communities in Waterloo region has already been thrown into jeopardy as a result of the provincial union's intimidation tactics. In fact, three double-hatters have already handed in their resignation letters in the Waterloo region, and more are on the way.

Minister, I hope you can understand why this is a major issue of public safety. Double-hatters play a vital role in providing the leadership needed to keep rural communities safe. Minister, will you step up to the plate and present a plan to keep double-hatters volunteering where they're needed the most, or will you do what the Liberal Party always does and turn your back on rural Ontario once again?

1130

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: With all due respect to the member opposite, the safety of our communities and the safety of our firefighters is not an issue between rural Ontario or urban Ontario. It's not an issue between the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party. That is an issue about making sure that members of our community are safe every single day. I will not debate the debate here by getting into these artificial cleavages that have been created by the party opposite, that this is somehow an assault on rural Ontario. On this side of the House, we'll continue to work hard to make sure that members of all communities across the province, as one Ontario, are protected every single day. We work with our firefighters to make that happen.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. April 1 has come and gone. That's the day the Horse Racing Partnership Plan was supposed to kick in, striking a five-year agreement for continuation of horse racing in Ontario. Despite this deadline, Sudbury

Downs, the only track in northern Ontario, still does not have an agreement, leaving the track owners, the trainers, the groomers, the vets, the farmers and everybody else who works at or around Sudbury Downs in limbo. Families are at risk of having to sell their farms, and employees don't know if they have a job.

When will the Premier deliver on the promise that she made a year ago in Sudbury to the people of Sudbury that she wants a vibrant horse racing industry in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite, if she is following this issue, knows that the negotiations are ongoing. She knows that we actually have put horse racing on a sustainable path forward. It surprises me that the third party would think that returning to a process that was not transparent, that was not accountable, would be the right direction to go. We're not going to go there. We have committed \$500 million over the next five years to make sure that horse racing around the province has a future. There are ongoing negotiations. My expectation is that we will have good news and that we will have racing at all of the tracks in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Those words are becoming harder and harder to believe. There is no agreement, and the racing season is supposed to start in a couple of weeks. Horses don't just happen in northern Ontario. They have to know that they have a future. The future of Sudbury Downs, the livelihood of the people who depend on it—all of this is still up in the air a couple of weeks before racing is supposed to start. Why? Because the government is missing the deadline that they announced a year ago.

Business needs stability to operate. Horse racing families need to know that they have a future. Right now, what we have is a self-fulfilling prophecy that, if you leave them in limbo long enough, they will all leave the area. There won't be horses to race in Sudbury Downs because you will have waited too long. Will the Premier act before it is too late to strike an agreement with Sudbury Downs, the only track in northern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The premise of that question is ridiculous. The member opposite knows that Sudbury Downs is a summer-meet track and that the dates would not be announced until later in April. That's the expectation year-over-year. The member of the third party knows that the negotiations are ongoing. I believe that she's taking advantage of this moment, because the agreement hasn't been signed, it hasn't been finalized, to ask this question, but she knows full well that the negotiations are under way. She knows that the race dates would not be announced until later in April. We look forward to that.

That agreement won't be in place because of the questions she has asked. The agreement will be in place because of the process that we've put in place, because of the money that we are investing in the horse racing industry and the commitment that I made to have a sustain-

able horse racing industry in the province. That's what we are going to have.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us in the gallery the member from Cambridge for the 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments: in the members' west gallery, Mr. Gerry Martiniuk. Welcome.

I suspect that the member from Cambridge's point of order was not a point of order but to steal the Speaker's thunder, so I stole it from you.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Huron-Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Energy concerning approvals of wind projects. This matter will be debated on Tuesday, April 29 at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Milloy that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of Bill 83.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members take their seats, please? Thank you.

Mr. Milloy has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas

Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gates, Wayne

Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Murray, Glen R.

Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzi
Jaczek, Helena
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Annett, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Jackson, Rod

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 62; the nays are 28.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 83. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until Thursday, April 17 at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1146.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Mme Meilleur / Loi de 2014 sur la protection du
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of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 17 April 2014

Jeudi 17 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 17 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 17 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER BUSINESS
CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT
À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT
PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 176, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item was last debated, we had completed questions and comments on Ms. Fife's speech, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I will now call for further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to say a few words about Bill 176, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014.

First of all, as the title says, it makes it really clear that there are really two parts to this bill. The first part of the bill has to do with the burdens that are put upon businesses in this province that are trying to grow their business, to bring prosperity, jobs etc. to different parts of our province. Under the first part of the act, the bill tries to address the burden—what people often refer to as red tape—that businesses have to go through. The bill is rather interesting in the sense that it makes it clear that there is a lot of red tape for businesses in Ontario, but the way it goes about cutting that red tape is rather interesting. It is under the responsibility of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, but the bill would not be solely for this ministry. The way I understand it is that it would apply to all of the ministries within the government. The way they would go at it is basically by removing one burden at a time. It feels like the intentions are good. We want businesses to be able to prosper in our province, but when you look at the amount of it, and

when you look at the steps that the bill is going to be taking, it seems like it's going to take us a long time to get there. But, you know, 1,000 miles—you do a step at a time, and eventually you get there.

I'm not sure, from the business point of view, some businesses, that they will find that the plan from this government is really going at a pace that keeps pace with what business needs.

I want to give an example of something that happened in my riding. My riding is in and around Sudbury. In a little community just north of Sudbury called Chelmsford, there is the intersection of two big highways. Highway 144 is the highway that takes people from Sudbury north to Timmins. It's a two-lane highway that goes straight north. If you go from Sudbury to Timmins, you have to go on Highway 144. As you leave Sudbury, you go through the beautiful little community of Chelmsford, which is in my riding. It's also where there's a bypass that goes around the city. If you go from west to north, you don't have to come through Sudbury; you can use a bypass.

Right where those two highways meet, the northwest bypass and the highway going north, an entrepreneur in my riding in Nickel Belt built a beautiful water park with slides and pools, a big picnic area and all sorts of—right on the side of the highway. So every tourist who ever goes to camp up north or ever comes from the west to Sudbury or lives in and around Sudbury—I mean, there are 170,000 people who live in and around Sudbury—that was the perfect location. It's located in a community that has lots of kids, lots of young families, and had great opportunity.

That was years ago, Speaker. Now this beautiful water park is there for all to see. It never got to open. The structures are still there. Everybody who drives by—and every year there are hundreds of thousands of people who will drive by—sees the slides are still there. Some pieces have been taken off to make them safer because kids had started to go and play. It never got to open. Why did it never open? Because of red tape; because a mismatch as to who had jurisdiction for health and safety for this, who could give the permission to access the water park from Highway 144 or from the northwest bypass. It was just a mess of a tangle of nobody knowing who was responsible and who could give the okay. The entrepreneur tried. The chamber of commerce put their shoulder to the wheel and really tried to make this project go through. We could see the potential. I mean, this is one of the busiest highway intersections in my riding—tons of people going by.

Sudbury may be in the north, but we have very hot, dry summers. We have lots of lakes. We're called the City

of Lakes for a reason. We have lots of lakes. Lots of people like swimming. We don't have a waterslide anywhere near in northern Ontario; that would have been the one and only. It stands there for everyone to see years and years later, and it never got the permission to open. Things like this should never happen. It was not through a lack of engineering, because all of the slides had been engineered by people who had put waterslides in many other parts of Ontario. It was not through a lack of ingenuity from the investors and from the owners. But it never saw the light of day. That is, first of all, a real shame. But this is also one of the reasons why a bill like what we have in front of us today is something that has been needed for a long time.

I've talked about the chamber of commerce putting their shoulder to the wheel to try to help out, to try to make sure that this waterslide would see the light of day in my riding. But it didn't matter. So people won't be very surprised when I have the strategic plan from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce in front of me.

0910

The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce is defined in my community as the voice of business, and they do that very well. They represent over 1,000 businesses of all sizes, and that includes Sudbury and Nickel Belt. I would say that, without a doubt, they are the most influential business association in this community. They do advocacy and communication, and they do this with good science behind it. It didn't matter that they brought together everything they had; we couldn't get this water park to open.

The mission of the chamber of commerce—I will read it: “As the voice of business, the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce advocates for business and community prosperity.” They are the “driving force behind community growth and economic prosperity.” They do this through a set of values that I think are worth noting. Our chamber of commerce's values are, first of all, integrity, courage, trust, committed, and broad thinking.

I wanted to focus on some of them, one being broad thinking. Not only do they bring fairness to the members; their process for consideration, as to what they will support, is fair. They look at how issues affect the entire community and all of the businesses as well. So if it's really good for business but really bad for our community, our chamber of commerce would not support something like this. They really take a broad look, but to no avail.

I'm sure every single one of us has experience in their riding that ends up in the exact same place as my experience, where the red tape was just so thick that good business opportunities, good people who invested their own hard-earned dollars to make something happen, end up in disaster through no fault of their own. Because of the system we have in place, because of the different ministries that couldn't get along, because of the different levels—some of it had to do with municipal, regional, provincial and federal—nobody knew who was allowed to give permission to let this thing go forward or to let it collapse, and the latter happened.

I see that my time is running quick, so I'm going to talk about the second part of the bill. The second part of the bill has to do with the creation of clusters. Nobody will be surprised that, in my neck of the woods, we have a mining cluster. They're called the Sudbury Area Mining Supply and Service Association. Their executive director is Mr. Dick DeStefano, and they have been in business for about 11 years. I talk about the Sudbury Area Mining Supply and Service Association, or mining cluster, in northern Ontario because I'm not sure how this bill, which talks about supporting business clusters, would affect a cluster that has been in place and has a track record of the last 11 years.

Eleven years ago, Mr. Dick DeStefano had the idea that there was more wealth and more business and more opportunity to be created by the supply and service to mining than the actual digging and extracting of the minerals that are in Nickel Belt. Don't get me wrong: We still have thousands of people in Nickel Belt who go underground every day to extract minerals for the different mining giants that we have, and we have people who work in the mills and the smelter and the refinery and all of this.

But did you know, Speaker, that we have more people in Sudbury who work in supply and service to the mining giants than who actually work for the mining industry? This has happened in part because we had people like Mr. Dick DeStefano, who really looked at it. It was a hunch that he had that we could build more prosperity in making sure that we had the supporting environment for, basically, everything that a mine could need, and we did that.

My eldest son works for Herold Supply, which basically exists to supply the mines with some of the needs they have, and there are hundreds and hundreds of other businesses in Sudbury that do that. But they all did that independently, and, I would say, with a fair bit of—not fighting, but really battling it out for their own business.

With this idea, 11 years ago, to create a cluster, not only did they bring the people who were already supplying services and products to the mines; they brought in other parts. They brought in our educational institutions, Collège Boréal, Cambrian College, Laurentian University; they brought in business people who could help some of those businesses that were just starting up, and we created this wonderful mining cluster that has been in existence for 11 years and has never really had any type of relationship with government. They did all of that on their own, and everybody would tell you that they have a prosperous future. I see no reason why they wouldn't.

What I do see is that we now have a bill that focuses on clusters, and that makes us a little bit nervous because, you see, things like raising money for mining—because mining is an expensive business—is not done in Sudbury; it is done in Toronto. So what if the people in the ministry—basically, if you work for the ministry, you work in Toronto—all of a sudden decided that, “Oh, no, the mining cluster should be in Toronto because Toronto is where we raise money for mining in Ontario”? That

wouldn't sit well with me, and that wouldn't sit well with a lot of people. So how this relationship is going to work is troublesome.

Do I believe in clusters? Absolutely. We are the living proof that once we brought those different businesses together, once we brought the intellectuals together, once we brought the colleges and universities together, once we brought the people who know a thing or two about human resources recruiting and recruitment and all of this all together, all of those little businesses were able to flourish—not only flourish, but they were able to gain insight as to how you do exports.

Have no fear; the intellectual knowledge about mining services and support in Sudbury is beyond—I would say, one of the best in the world. We export our knowledge and skills worldwide. There are people who come to Sudbury from all over the world because they want to know what Penguin innovation in my riding in Naughton has to offer. They do all sorts of remote control and how you mine more safely etc. for the mining industry, but they have exported their knowledge, their skills and their know-how worldwide, and so have a lot of little businesses all around Nickel Belt.

I have quite a few industrial parks in my riding, and most of those industrial parks are packed to capacity with healthy businesses that have forged through the recession and kept on working because their knowledge and skills are recognized not only province-wide and country-wide but worldwide. And why is that? It was because of the good work of Mr. DeStefano and everybody else who put their heads together and said that we needed to form a cluster.

I see the value in this. What I fail to see is what the role of government is in that. Our experience in Sudbury is a very positive one, but not one that was guided or directed by the government. So the entrepreneurial spirit behind the seeds planted to grow this cluster—is this something that is easily married with a government? I'm not sure. I don't want to put it down; I just want to better understand how those two will be put together.

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Je vois que le temps qui m'a été donné est quasiment terminé. Je voulais donner quelques mots face au projet de loi 178. Le projet de loi s'appelle la Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

C'est un projet de loi qui a deux parties. La première partie, c'est vraiment tout ce qu'on appelle le fardeau fiscal. En français, on dit le « red tape ». Ça ressemble pas mal à l'anglais, mais ça dit ce que cela a à dire. Donc, le gouvernement s'engage au travers du projet de loi à, premièrement, en faire un rapport à chaque année pour voir où on est capable de diminuer le « red tape » au travers de tous les différents ministères et en faire rapport.

La deuxième partie du projet de loi, c'est pour la formation d'îlots où on met ensemble tous ceux qui

travaillent dans la même direction, dans la même sorte d'industrie, pour que tout le monde en profite.

Il y a un très bel exemple de ça à Sudbury avec tout ce qui est du soutien et du service au secteur minier. Il y a plus de gens à Sudbury qui travaillent pour soutenir les mines qu'il y en a qui travaillent pour les compagnies minières, et ça, c'est grâce au travail de M. Dick DeStefano. Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the helpful comments from the member from Nickel Belt. I want to address a couple of her concerns. I know that she ended with clusters, so perhaps I'll begin there.

I was happy to know that her colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, my critic on economic development, spoke very positively about the cluster element of this bill. Of course, the mining sector—I was very happy to hear the history of how it has evolved over the last decade or so, including the hard work of Mr. DeStefano.

The great thing about clusters is that we bring together all partners. It's not government trying to direct anything here. It's recognizing that government does have a role in terms of encouraging job creation and economic growth, but the partners that are essential for cluster development are the private sector—of course—and labour, the academic institutions, the local levels of government and often not-for-profit organizations as well. So it's really about bringing all of those partners together. The government has an important convening role to play, but those partners together will guide the future development of clusters, including the important mining and forestry sectors in the northern part of the province.

With regard to burden reduction, I can't emphasize enough just how important this proposed legislation is. We've already, in the last five years, reduced the number of regulations that apply to business by 17%. More than 80,000 regulations have been eliminated.

Going forward, this was a request made to us specifically by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who have said that as a result of this proposed legislation, Ontario's going to be joining “the best in class in regulatory reform.” So it continues on our hard work to make it easier for business to do business in this province.

I thank, again, the member for Nickel Belt for her comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Nickel Belt. I'm very surprised and indeed impressed, because she recognizes something that Tim Hudak and our party have recognized for some time: that is the onerous burden of red tape and regulation.

This bill in itself is a fine example of a bill that's creating red tape. I'd like the viewers to know that Bill 176 has two component parts to it; there are two sections. One is to require the government to report on the burden. Now, the burden has been defined as red tape. Let's look at the actual definition of “burden.”

"Burden," in this sense of a business case, is defined as a cost measured in money, time or resources and is considered unnecessary—that's the burden part—to achieve the purpose of the cost being created. And they're going to report on this. So that in itself, this bill, creates red tape. It is a shameful example of a government that simply cannot manage complex files.

I think they should look at the million-jobs plan by our leader, Tim Hudak, and our caucus—Monte McNaughton and a number of our members. I'm looking forward to one of our members this morning speaking on this: Mr. Leone. I hope he gets a chance to speak next. I'm looking for his riding name here. He's from Cambridge. There's an area that creates jobs. I'm sure he will have much to say about that important function.

The second part of the bill—and it's a pleasure and it's respectful that the minister is here this morning, and I do think he works hard. But working hard only means that you're moving; it doesn't mean you're actually doing anything. I think, in all due respect, the cluster, for instance, that they've taken apart—the auto sector in Canada is in repair. What has happened to the mining sector? The Ring of Fire—they all picked up their tools and left. So I think you should take a second look at your plan. It's simply not working. I don't blame you entirely for all of this. Perhaps I blame the Premier herself. She has no interest in jobs and the economy. She's never tabled a plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

M. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ça me fait tout le temps plaisir de suivre ma collègue de Nickel Belt. L'histoire qu'elle a partagée avec nous ce matin à propos d'un petit parc d'amusement qu'il y avait dans le coin de Chelmsford—je le connais très bien. Je suis souvent passé par le parc et j'ai tout le temps envisagé d'aller m'amuser à ce parc avec mes enfants. Ça a pris beaucoup de temps pour qu'on voie un avancement avec le parc. Tout d'un coup, quand c'est arrivé, le petit bout de la « slide » qui était là au parc et qui s'établit dans l'eau—ce n'est jamais arrivé. Je n'ai jamais eu la chance d'y aller.

Ça nous emporte à la discussion qu'on a aujourd'hui sur le problème des régulations qui sont mises en place sans savoir, à travers de la bureaucratie qui s'est développée pendant plusieurs années, ce que la main droite fait envers la main gauche.

I just highlighted some of the issues that the member from Nickel Belt brought from her area. There is a lot of burdensome bureaucracy out there. I can give you an example from my riding. In the community of White River, there's a new sawmill—well, not a new sawmill; it's a sawmill that had been idle for about seven years. A gentleman came in and invested a lot of his time and a lot of his own personal money to get that mill up and running. Just the bureaucracy to get that mill up and running—we're talking about Ontario being open for business, and it takes over seven weeks to have the hydro switch turned on. This is someone who was putting

millions of dollars into a community, bringing in over 200 to 300 jobs, and you have to wait seven weeks, and we're saying we're open for business?

This is something that is a step in the right direction. It is a small step. But what we really need to do if we're going to be removing regulations is we need to find out why they were there in the first place. By removing them, are we making sure that we're actually going to benefit those who are looking to open businesses here in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Our government has a vision for economic growth which is focused on investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate. We've made great strides in overcoming the challenges posed by a constantly changing global economic system. The Better Business Climate Act, if passed, would build on those efforts. It would place new accountability measures on government to reduce unnecessary regulatory and administrative burdens. Modernizing administrative and compliance processes could save Ontario businesses millions of dollars while still protecting the public interest.

This legislation will make sure that reducing burden stays a government priority by mandating that the minister publish a report every year outlining what the government is doing to save businesses time and money. This reporting commitment is an important part of Ontario's new burden reduction strategy, which will aim to save businesses and other stakeholders over \$100 million by 2016-17.

The Better Business Climate Act, if passed, would also help us spur the growth of regional economic clusters and would help our government enhance partnerships with business, academia, labour, non-profits and other shareholders to accelerate regional economic development. It would put in place the tools the government needs to work in partnership with stakeholders to identify key policies to support cluster growth.

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Mr. Speaker, whether we are saving businesses time and money or strengthening regional economic clusters, our government is proving that Ontario is strongest when everyone works together. By focusing on collaboration and partnership, by working together with industry leaders, municipalities, researchers, economic institutions, economic development associations and all of our stakeholders, we are creating a stronger economic climate that supports businesses, spurs innovation and provides good jobs for our citizens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nickel Belt, you have two minutes for a response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wasn't sure if there was one more going on.

First, I'd like to thank the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment for being here while we talk about the bill. It is greatly appreciated. It does show respect, and I'm really happy that you shared with me information on some of the questions that I had. It is helpful in clarifying what the bill is trying to do, specifically with clusters, where the role of government—he defined it as a “convening” role. Frankly, I would have no problem with that.

To the member from Durham: Yes, the NDP does support business. We realize that in order for people to have jobs, you have to have businesses. It has always been there. It is not only the Tories who think that people work for different businesses. As I said, my son, my eldest, works in the mining cluster service industry. They are wonderful places to work. The member from Sudbury-Manitoulin—no.

Interjection: Algoma.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Algoma-Manitoulin—sorry about that. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has seen, like thousands of other people, what red tape does. What red does: A beautiful waterpark in Chelmsford, with all of the amenities that every kid would dream of in the summer, sits there, not allowed to open. This is what red tape does. If you ever want to convince people that we need to attack red tape, bring them to Chelmsford, at the corner of Highway 144 and the northwest bypass, and everybody will be convinced this is a real shame.

To the member from York Centre—a good overview of the bill. The bill has two parts; some of them are conflicted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries township.

Before I begin, I just wanted to, for the first time, publicly express my condolences to the member for Whitby-Oshawa on the passing of Jim Flaherty, her husband. I think all members of the Legislature who took part in the celebrations yesterday truly appreciated the extent of one great human being, one compassionate Conservative. We will surely miss him on this side of the House.

I remark about this, Mr. Speaker, because it's just an opportunity for all of us to share in public service and the opportunities that we have. I had the opportunity of sitting among many of my colleagues in the Liberal Party, in the Liberal caucus, yesterday, and heard some great stories. I didn't know, for example, that the Minister of Transportation is actually Kim Campbell's—the former Prime Minister's—cousin. I didn't know that. But it was a very fascinating story to hear the heritage of that.

We sat with the Minister of Rural Affairs and the Minister of Health. All of them were very interested in hearing about the redevelopment of the Albany Club in Toronto. We had some good times talking about that.

I also learned that the place to be in Peterborough is the East City café—I hope I got that right—where the

Minister of Rural Affairs said that you have to go and have the western sandwich and then you'll know everything about Peterborough for \$6—\$7 with a tip, he says. At one point in the future, I'm sure I'm going to have to visit to make sure that he's actually right.

I want to, first of all, make several comments to this bill. I know that the minister, who is here—and I appreciate the fact that he is listening to debate today—has been going across the province to talk about economic development, trade and employment, which is his critic portfolio. He came to Cambridge as well, to do a round table with our local chamber of commerce. He must be hearing exactly what we're hearing on this side of the House. We obviously take the opportunity to visit and consult with businesses, particularly in the pre-budget season, to get a sense of where people are headed and where their minds are at when we talk about trying to improve the business climate. Certainly, one of the things that pops up time and time again is the reduction of red tape. This is something that has been long identified by our party, and certainly through the last election in 2011 we made a number of commitments to reduce red tape. We want to actually reduce red tape by a third. We want to set a target and try to achieve that target.

Simply acknowledging that red tape is a problem I think belies the underlying concerns that businesses have. For example, one of the things that we continually hear is that it's just not the red tape that is plaguing our businesses in the province of Ontario; it's the entire business climate—a business climate that is burdened by red tape. What red tape actually does to business is something that we have to focus on. We talk to those businesses. They say, “Yes, reduce red tape.” But what they say is that the whole culture of government today is to put hurdle after hurdle after hurdle in front of a business in order for them to succeed and create jobs. Whether it's a visit by a labour inspector or an environmental assessment that they have to do or, as the member for Algoma-Manitoulin had suggested, it's about hydro problems and hydro policies—at every given step, at every given stage, these businesses are being burdened by red tape. It's costing them time and it's costing them money.

Later on today, I believe I'll be joined by Robert Haas of Cambridge. He's going to bring his son to learn a little bit more about our democracy here at Queen's Park. Robert used to be the owner of a print shop in my riding. I met with him a couple of years ago, and he sat me down and basically said, “Look, Rob, every time I have someone visit me, every time I have an inspector or a civil servant come to visit me, it ends up costing me days of my time which I don't have, and the more time I'm spending on filling in reports and rectifying concerns, the less time I'm actually selling product and making a living.” He says that every time somebody comes, it's not only a cost in the time that it takes that he has to deal with these issues, but the money—thousands of dollars at every turn, whether it's a new guard that's put on a machine or it's an assessment that they have to do—because in the printing business obviously you have chemicals

that you're dealing with, and the regulations about where you put these sorts of things do impact the way businesses are able to thrive and succeed.

I'm sad to report that his print shop in Cambridge no longer exists. He no longer employs people. He's out of business. This was a business owner who, time and again, would put his employees' interests ahead of his own. He could probably translate and transmit to talk to you about how many times he avoided taking a paycheque for himself in order to make sure that his employees were actually making money. Red tape was often a source of frustration for him, because it's not like he had the capital to be able to pay, out of the blue, a \$10,000 repair job, which requires engineering and parts that probably cost in the hundreds of dollars; once you get consultants involved and once you get the proper certifications, it ends up costing thousands, if not tens of thousands. These businesses that don't have that capacity to pay those things—often these business owners are not taking an income themselves. This contributes to the malaise that we see in businesses. Finally the burden was too tough and he had to close shop, and that cost jobs in my riding.

I want to pick up where—I realize that the member for Algoma-Manitowlin had two minutes for questions and comments, but he was talking about hydro. There are a couple of things that I want to talk about with respect to hydro, red tape and regulations.

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First of all, I have a few businesses that have come to see me in my riding that are talking about the fact that they have to pay a deposit that's the equivalent of three months of projected hydro use. What happens is that this business owner who recently came to me, probably within the last six months, came to me and said, "This business is in receivership. I'm buying it. I want to turn it around. But our hydro distributor, our local hydro utility, wants to have three months of projected hydro use."

If they looked at the projected hydro use over the previous year before he purchased the business, it would actually be zero, because there was no business that was running. But that's not what they calculate. They actually calculate the projected hydro use if the factory, the manufacturing facility, was at full capacity.

So this gentleman, who wants to employ people in my riding with his investment group, wants to come in and start a business, has to fork over hundreds of thousands of dollars in projected hydro use, and this is a deposit. It's not like the deposit is ever going to be used. It's going to sit with this local hydro utility forever, until the business decides it can no longer operate.

We're just sucking money out of entrepreneurs who want to actually create jobs in the province of Ontario. If you want to talk about red tape reduction, we have to look at these items. We have to be behind business, not standing in front of them.

This gentleman would say, "I'm okay if they want to make sure that I have good credit," which he does; he owns other businesses, so he can demonstrate that. "And

I'm okay with actually putting the deposit in. But I'd like to get that deposit back at some point. I'd like to use that money to create jobs," at his facility in my riding.

It's the business climate that is so vital and so important to nurturing; it's not simply a commitment to reduce red tape, but it's also about creating that climate that says, "We want you here, to make your investment, to create jobs in the province of Ontario." Without that ethos, without that mentality, the business climate in Ontario will suffer. We have to do a serious job of addressing that concern, and I'm not sure this particular piece of legislation quite gets us there. I appreciate the fact that the government finally has understood that red tape is an issue, but we have other concerns that certainly have to be made as well.

Sticking to hydro, Mr. Speaker, I have a company in my riding called Integrated Packaging Films. It is a company that recycles plastics. I recently visited this company, probably within the last three months. Every time I go there, I get their hydro bill. This company employs less than 30 people. The wages, roughly, of the workers in that facility are between \$30,000 and \$40,000. And do you know what? They have used \$12,000 in hydro. Their global adjustment alone: \$30,557.76.

As this company would suggest, this is the average wage of what employees at Integrated Packaging Films earn in a year. In 12 months, that's 12 people's salaries going to this massive bill, this massive part of our hydro bill which is the global adjustment. Then if you factor in the \$7,000—almost \$8,000—in delivery, and you factor in the regulatory charges of \$2,000 plus, and a debt retirement charge of almost \$3,000, the \$12,000 of hydro use turns out to be a bill before taxes of \$55,000 and, after taxes, of \$62,000. Mr. Speaker, this is just a one-month hydro bill for a company that employs just 20 people.

If we're clearly interested in trying to help businesses succeed and create jobs, we actually have to look at these issues. It's not simply enough to make a commitment to reduce red tape. We have to change the climate. We have to make Ontario open for business again, and I don't see that coming from this particular government.

We have, in the past, committed to reducing red tape. We've suggested that we have to have a target of one third. We want to make a minister responsible for that red tape reduction and tie the pay to the performance of that minister responsible for reducing red tape. That is, Mr. Speaker, some accountability. We would put the Deputy Premier in charge of that specific red tape reduction.

We want to give an assurance to the business community that we want Ontario to be open for business. We don't want business after business going to other jurisdictions, whether it's in Canada, to our neighbouring Great Lake states, or south in the United States; we want to make sure that we have that climate here and that Ontario is open for business. We want to make sure that the investments that Canadians want to make in business aren't being done abroad, but are being done right here.

Since this piece of legislation does talk about two separate schedules, I do want to take some time—because

the first schedule is talking about the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, so we actually have to report on the reduction of red tape, which, in itself, is interesting because by virtue of having a report you actually are creating red tape. I know the member for Durham, in his two minutes, actually stated that; that we are, in a sense, creating red tape by trying to reduce red tape, which is, in itself, very interesting.

The second part of this bill talks about something completely different, which is the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, which is in schedule 2 of Bill 176, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just take the bill—if we actually took some time to read the legislation—and point you to a few things that I'm pretty concerned about. As I just stated, the reality of it is, any time you actually have a planning and reporting mechanism and you are having to feed that plan and that reporting with information, in the process of doing that planning and reporting and feeding of information, you actually are creating more paperwork and more red tape.

If you look at the contents of the plan, this schedule talks about economic clusters—and I will say that I'm a big fan of economic clusters. I think they have shown to work in various parts of the province, and particularly in my region down the road in Kitchener where a very successful cluster has developed and emerged. But it has developed and emerged not because of anything the government has done. Certainly, it has assisted in that, but by creating these plans and burdening that whole process with red tape, you are actually creating it.

So section 3 of schedule 2: "A plan with respect to the development of a cluster shall include the following:

"1. A description of the cluster.

"2. An assessment of challenges and opportunities with respect to the development of the cluster." So we have to create that information, and that information is going to come from the partners who are going to be doing and taking part in the cluster. Hopefully, that includes a mix of the municipalities, post-secondary institutions and businesses that are going to create that, but they have to feed that with information.

"3. The objectives and intended outcomes of the plan."

And then we go into: "4. Performance measures to evaluate whether the objectives and intended outcomes of the plan are being achieved.

"5. A description of actions that could be taken by the minister, or the businesses or other entities that form the cluster, to assist in the achievement of the objectives and intended outcomes of the plan."

And, "6. Such additional items as may be prescribed by the regulations."

So, Mr. Speaker, it's fine that we engage in a process like this, but now we are saying, "A description of actions that could be taken by ... businesses or other entities" in order to achieve the objectives of the cluster. What does that mean? It means that businesses are going to be dictated what they have to do. Maybe it's reporting

that they have to do, or maybe it's an altering of their business plans or processes. This is being driven not organically by those businesses and by the clusters, but by a prescription of government regulation that I think could very well cripple the clusters and the economic development opportunities that these clusters could create.

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I realize the minister is saying that somebody is asking for this, but the point remains here that in schedule 1, we're talking about the reduction of red tape, and in schedule 2, we're talking about adding more red tape to the business climate and business environment. They can say people are asking for that, but the businesses that I talk to don't want more red tape. They don't want more regulation; they want less. They want government to partner with them and not stand in their way. That is, in essence, where we differ.

I think that there are important clusters that can develop, but at the end of the day, when we have a bill that purports to reduce red tape, we are at the very same time adding to that burden. For us, what we want to see is an overall reduction of that burden. That is the point that I don't think the members of the government who were trying to engage in a discussion with me—but I will continue to go through the Chair—about what we are supposed to do with this legislation. Again, I have concern when we are trying to tell businesses what to do. By doing that, we're adding to their burden. Any time you do that, you're adding to that burden. Schedule 2 of this piece of legislation is doing exactly that.

There are great ideas that are happening right across the province of Ontario to develop these clusters. They're doing it organically. They're making partnerships where partnerships are going to prosper. We have to make sure that we are acting, as legislators, trying to add purposeful debate to what we are talking about, which is the overall business climate of Ontario, that we're not adding to that burden and that we are taking steps, at every step of the way, to reduce it.

Overall, we have a piece of legislation that has at least an acknowledgment that red tape is a continuing issue in the province of Ontario. I'm happy to see that we're actually debating this. What I'm disappointed in seeing is that, at the same time as trying to fix the problem of red tape, burden and regulation, we are actually adding to that burden. That's where I see the disconnect in this particular piece of legislation: that schedule 1 is not necessarily consistent with what's happening in schedule 2.

So I think we have to be careful when we're talking about this legislation. I will continue to debate. I will listen with interest to the debate this morning about how we can improve the business climate of the province in Ontario. I think a lot has to be done in order to achieve our objectives, which are to have Ontario businesses grow and prosper and create jobs in this great province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this house and, today, to be able to follow the

comments of the member from Cambridge. Although we do disagree profoundly on some issues, on this bill he has raised some very good issues. One is the hurdles that government red tape causes businesses. We have some questions on whether this bill is going to solve it.

He brought up another issue that has to be brought forward. It's not only the hurdles; it's the culture of government. I will give you an example. I'm looking forward to having 10 or 20 minutes to speak on this further, but in my few minutes—we have several mines in my riding. One of their big shovels, their big backhoe, broke. They needed another shovel. Seemed simple enough. It had to be transported 300 miles. Seemed simple enough. They needed an oversize permit. Seemed simple enough.

Three weeks for an oversize permit: That's what they were told. So we had to go and chase it. There's the problem. The business owner called me. He said, "John, I've got a great idea for you guys. I'll make you some money. Create an expedited oversize-permit service; charge \$500 for same-day service. It will be cheap for me." But that shouldn't have to be. There's nothing against getting oversize permits, but why does it have to be three weeks? Why?

Things like that: That's what drives business people crazy. And I'm not sure that this bill is meant to address that, but someone has to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to rise and speak to the Better Business Climate Act this morning. Ontario's new burden reduction strategy will save businesses and stakeholders over \$100 million by 2016-17, which is fantastic.

I'm enjoying listening to the debate, but I do want to clarify and respond to something the member from Cambridge said, which is that Ontario is not competitive. In fact, Ontario has one of the most competitive climates for business in the world. That's something we should all be very proud of.

As the Minister of Consumer Services, it's very important to us at our ministry that we continue to do the work we do to strike a balance between protecting consumers and the public—whether it's safety issues—and the impact on businesses, whether that's direct or indirect. We work very hard to strike that balance and to ensure that businesses are not overly regulated.

My ministry is a high-regulation ministry, but we do keep in mind the impact of our programs and services on business. Whether it's the Technical Standards and Safety Authority; TICO, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario; the Electrical Safety Authority; work we are doing on the Condominium Act; other things we've done on debt settlement companies, door-to-door sales, real estate transactions, much of our work is very mindful of the impact on business.

Many of our delegated authorities that fall under the auspices of my ministry already have or are moving to a risk-based assessment for inspections and reporting requirements. So I think our work at the Ministry of Con-

sumer Services addresses the spirit and intent of what's before us here. And as I said, Ontario is one of the most competitive areas for business in the world, and we should be very proud of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a couple of comments on Bill 176. As we all know, this is a fairly short bill, but one that has a potentially huge impact. One of the things that I think is missing in this conversation is how this affects small business. I say that because of my experience through my own constituents. It seems to me that there's an inverse ratio between the number of rules and regulations and the number of employees, and so very often an individual, who is a single proprietor or has three or four employees finds themselves tied up in incredible red tape.

I'll give you two examples where even ministries can't decide on the rules. In one instance, I have a constituent whose level of chlorine must meet the Ministry of Health standards and at the same time that contradicts the Ministry of the Environment restrictions. I have another one: a paint booth, obviously one that requires a great deal of regulation to make sure that it's safe and all precautions are taken. We understand that, and so does the owner of the paint booth, but the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of the Environment couldn't decide, or at least contradict each other, in the way that the door is hung. It's those kinds of things that simply drive small businesses crazy: the fact that ministries themselves can't agree on what they should be suggesting to the public; just one example of how bad it is.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to try and touch on two issues from Algoma-Manitoulin on this. A small group—a contractor trucking business; what they do is they fill all the sand pits. They do some crushing for the province, as well as privately. They're called Gilbertson trucking. They're on St. Joseph Island.

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Every year they go through this permitting process in regard to moving their equipment from site to site. In some instances, they can get a project permit. Their equipment doesn't change. It's the same loader; the same truck; the same equipment; the same ramp; the same, same, same. But every time, they have to go through a process of applying through the red tape and the bureaucracy.

A little while ago, all the permitting was done out of the Soo, which was a 24-hour permit most of the time. Then that shut down and got shifted over to North Bay. Then it went up from 24 hours to 72 hours, costing jobs. We're not talking about a lot of jobs here, but for us in northern Ontario, 15 jobs is a lot of jobs.

They'd have to go through that process of applying for it, and then it went into a week by getting this permit. Then it moved from North Bay to St. Catharines, and the delays have come up again. So the impact that it's having on small business is huge.

When I was first elected, there was another company, NRE—Northern Reliable Energy—out of Chapleau. Being a little eager beaver, a newly elected member, I talked to this gentlemen. He was telling me about the bureaucracy he was going through over the years of meeting with the MOE, the OPA, energy, and so on and so forth. We went through the process of doing it again. You know what? I got caught up in the whole bureaucracy along with him. So we did it twice. He has done it four times. We've done it a fifth time. We had a meeting this week on Tuesday, so we're starting the cycle again of this bureaucracy. These jobs that are potentially available for the community of Chapleau—we're talking about 120 jobs. That's the impact of what bureaucracy causes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the members for Timiskaming—Cochrane, York—Simcoe, Algoma—Manitoulin and the Minister of Consumer Services. My NDP colleagues from Algoma—Manitoulin and Timiskaming—Cochrane struck a chord with me with their discussions on the oversized permit, because, in Cambridge, we are a transportation superpower.

Mr. Bill Walker: A cluster.

Mr. Rob Leone: A cluster, even; that's true.

We have a lot of transportation companies in my riding. We are situated in southern Ontario within close proximity to the rest of North America. This oversized permit issue is one that, actually, I hear about, too. The remarkable thing is that if you actually look at other jurisdictions, they do this far better than we do in Ontario. When I hear the Minister of Consumer Services talk about a competitive business climate in the province of Ontario, I have to ask questions about: Have you looked abroad about these oversized permits and what they're doing in other states and other provinces to get these permits right away? I wonder that.

I also wonder if people on the other side were actually listening to my remarks, because if you think that having a \$30,000-a-month global adjustment is encouraging a very competitive business climate, I would have serious reservations about the ability of that particular party to manage the economy in the province of Ontario.

These ideas—there are just two of them, Mr. Speaker, that we've expressed in these two minutes—are crippling the economy; are not encouraging economic growth. These are the kinds of things that we have to work through.

I'm encouraged to hear my colleagues to my left talk—both literally and figuratively—about these issues, because they are important to the people of the province of Ontario. We have to make sure that we're not waiting three weeks or four weeks just to have someone go to work the next day, Mr. Speaker. That's what is particularly troubling about what I'm hearing today from the government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity this morning to add some value to the debate

on Bill 176. For the viewer, I'd like to—through you, Mr. Speaker. This is An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014—a very well-sounded, well-intended title of the bill. Let's have a look at it here this morning.

We've had a very good debate. The member from Nickel Belt spoke. I thought she raised some very good points with respect to a particular red tape issue in her riding, and gave voice to that, as well as our member who just spoke, Mr. Leone, the member from Cambridge. He also gave a tribute to concerns in his riding. I think every single MPP in this House would like to give voice to concerns in their ridings.

Just on a specific to Bill 176, it does have two parts, and one is self-explanatory. It's burden reduction reporting. So there's a requirement now, which is in itself red tape, to report on the reduction of red tape, the burden. Then you go into defining what a burden is. This is important to understand, because we're going to have to report this. Companies are going to have to sit down and figure out what the burden is in their departments. I'm going to read the definition. It says that a burden is defined as a cost that is measured by money, time and resources and considered unnecessary—that's important; that's the burden part, that it's unnecessary—to achieve the purpose that was created in the first place and report on how many necessary regulations surround that reporting. So it sounds to me like this bill is the enactment or formalization of red tape itself.

Let's say that you're running a little mom-and-pop shop, a dry cleaners or whatever, and you've got to report on all these things, whether it's the chemicals you use or don't use, and how much. Actually, they're probably going to have to hire somebody to fill out this report every month. Now, there are more important things here, Mr. Speaker. There's a million people out of work in this province. Do you understand?

I want to keep on track. The second part of the bill—it's a very small bill. Actually, respectfully, the minister was here earlier this morning. This second part of the bill is even more interesting. What that part of the bill does—and I'll just read it here from the explanatory notes. It enacts a Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act. If they only had a plan for jobs. What they have in Ontario right now is a plan that everybody is going to work for the government. I'm pretty sure you're either going to be a policeman, a fireman, a nurse, a teacher, a doctor. Wait a minute—everybody can't work for the government.

I want a report. I would support this bill on the condition that they have a report every month on the actual jobs they've created or at least worked in partnership with business—to not put them out of business because of the price of electricity, the high cost of regulation and red tape. That's what we hear from the CFIB—the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—relentlessly, every month. These are small businesses that mortgage their house to rent a shop, to set up a restaurant or to set up selling paint, cutting hair or whatever they're doing. They are buying their own jobs. We should be supporting those families.

Now, I'm going to break away for a minute. Last week, I had to go and get my hair cut, in preparation for Easter probably. I went in to see my barber, Dave Bryant, and his daughter, and they were telling me—I'm not making this up—they were talking about the College of Trades. The guy has been barbering for 30 years. He does a wonderful job, I'm sure you'd all agree, and I see Mr. Arnott has had his hair cut here this morning, but I wonder if they're down inspecting that barber downstairs.

Now, that's red tape. They've got this inspector parked outside in the car, the white car with a trillium on it, a company car—you taxpayers are paying for it—he's wearing a suit—

Interjection: A brand new car.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, a brand new car. He went and had it washed first thing in the morning. That cost another \$5 or \$10. Where's that money coming from? The taxpayers of Ontario.

He's not creating a job—no, no, no; he's going to kill a job. He walks in to Dave Bryant's and says, "Where is your certificate with a seal on it?" The guy has been cutting hair for 30 years. That's red tape. My one suggestion this morning is, eliminate the College of Trades. That's just one example.

Now, part B of this says—partnerships—what it does is, it goes on to talk about "prepare plans with respect to the development of clusters." Now, that's a very fancy term: "cluster." A cluster would be determined to be industries with related functions and/or support or ancillary services. That's kind of what it would be.

Let's see. I worked for the auto sector for 31 years, and in that sector in Oshawa—my colleague Jerry Ouellette, representing Oshawa for almost 19 years and before that; an excellent member, a tremendous member. In fact, he got elected in that riding because he represents the working person, as do I. My riding has more farmers than auto workers.

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I would say, though, that the story here is that the cluster idea is a good idea. We have working clusters in Ontario, and I will be respectful of that: Kitchener-Waterloo with the centre for excellence there, the University of Waterloo and Laurier—very good; Oshawa, and our region, Durham. My riding is called Durham but it really includes Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. Uxbridge is very highly mobile; they all work in Toronto and have good jobs, I'm sure—a lot of agriculture there, too.

But the cluster in Durham was all focused around the most important single investment in the history of Durham region, made by, respectfully, Jim Flaherty. Jim Flaherty created the environment for the government to work with the other partners to create the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. That has provided the human infrastructure of knowledge and skills, along with Durham College, to train young people in the skills, whether it's trades or academic problem-solving, to invest in adding value to materials, like taking steel, glass

and rubber and making it into a car. These engineering and technical support skills are all as a result.

Now, what's our specialty in Durham? We're the centre of energy for the entire country. We have the two largest nuclear plants: Pickering, as well as Darlington nuclear plants. Those are highly technical, high-paying jobs, and I suspect that the university and college play a very important role in creating jobs.

That's what I should see in this bill. If you're talking back to the cluster thing, I would want you to recognize the UOIT as a centre of excellence for energy, and the college, as well, for trades.

Now, if you get into the whole issue of clusters, when you look around Ontario, one of the most important areas for the future, certainly for sustainability—and I define sustainability as enough for everyone forever. That's the real definition of sustainability: enough for everyone forever. What are the most important things so that we have enough for everyone forever in sustainability, in the economy and in the universe that we share? Food and water.

Food and food production is a highly technical area. It's very capital-intensive. You have to have a land base; you have to have very sophisticated equipment—tractors and GPS and all of these things; then you need a quota of some sort, generally. If it's livestock, you'd definitely need a quota; otherwise, you have issues on seeds that you either own the right to plant or not.

The issue here is that just recently they've closed two colleges dealing with agriculture in eastern Ontario, so what they are doing in action doesn't support the goals. I look at this bill trying to create clusters. Eastern Ontario is almost entirely dependent on a kind of fragile, rural economy. What have they done? They've taken the two colleges and threatened to close them, and there are students who would learn practical skills to advance the value in agriculture, whether it's on the livestock side or on the field crop side. That's important for Ontario, it's important for eastern Ontario and it is important for Canada. Those are just a couple of comments with respect to the clusters.

Another example of a failure—and I don't blame entirely the Premier or even the minister, for that matter. We have the Ring of Fire; it has the most potential of any area in Canada, next to the tar sands or the oil resources in Alberta. The largest single investor—they've been monkeying around up there for four or five years. There are no roads in there; you can't get in there. There needs to be an investment to create jobs. They've got these economic development funds for eastern Ontario and southern Ontario—mostly political stuff, really. They fire in a couple hundred thousand dollars and claim that they've created all of these jobs; I'm not sure they have or not. But this cluster in northern Ontario would be a good example.

The Ring of Fire has the highest-value resources. It's already been discovered and defined and kind of outlined what the value of this thing is: billions of dollars. There will be highly technical jobs, high-paid jobs, and they

should be focusing on putting in place the infrastructure instead of wasting a billion-plus on gas plants and needless other waste that I don't even want to talk about—these investigations going on, on the role that the Premier did or didn't have, and lawyers and all this stuff—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome some family who are here in attendance: my cousin-in-law and uncle-in-law, Adrian LeCoyte, who lives in Pickering, and his father, David LeCoyte, who is here from Swindon, England, and who's visiting Canada. I welcome them.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to introduce a very good friend, a long-time friend of mine, Colonel Robert O'Brien, who's here with his family. He's the grandfather of page Isabella.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to welcome to the public gallery the mother and father of our fabulous page, Eli Park—I saw them walk in: Joanne Oxley and John Park.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to introduce the parents of my page, Mira Donaldson—her parents are Kelly Spicer and Guy Donaldson—as well as their family friends Wendell Spicer and Bunny Spicer.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome the family of page Caroline Falkner. Her mother, Julia Martin, is here in the House. Her father, Matt Falkner, is visiting for the first time. Other members of the family have been here before. Amy Falkner was a page in the previous rotation, I believe; so, Amy, welcome back to Queen's Park. Brothers Benjamin Falkner and Christopher Falkner and cousin Kathy Lacroix are in the House. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakubuski: On behalf of page Kathryn Nicol, I'd like to introduce, in the galleries today, her mother—is it McRver?—Janet McRver; her father, Jason Nicol; and her brother, Liam Nicol. They're joining us in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome Karen Laffrenier, the mother of our great page Callista, on Callista's last day here.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Isabella O'Brien, who's the page from my riding, is joined today by her mother, Angela Ceccato; her father, Robert O'Brien; her uncle, Ivan Ceccato; her grandmother, Gerri O'Brien; and her grandfather, Bert O'Brien. They're in the members' galley, with almost enough of them together to have Thanksgiving dinner right here.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know that all members will join me in thanking and giving them our wonderful reception of how great the pages have been. This is their last day.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their reception of these wonderful pages. I have told them that during this week they have been the best pages of that week that I've ever seen.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for an opportunity to correct my record. My eyes were not deceiving me: The spelling was incorrect on my sheet, and I want to correct my record. Page Kathryn Nicol is joined by, of course, as I said, her father, Jason Nicol; her brother, Liam Nicol; and her mother, Janet McRuer. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does have a point of order. It's always in order for a member to correct their record.

VISITORS

Ms. Laurie Scott: Megan Barkey has been my page from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for the last five weeks. Her mother, Angelie; father, David; and sister, Madeline, are here again today in the public gallery somewhere. Welcome. There you are, behind me.

Mr. Rob Leone: My guests have not yet arrived, but I'd like to welcome Michael and Robert Haas. Robert is bringing his son Michael to learn a bit more about our democracy here in Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Acting Premier: I rise today, obviously, on the news of an increase to the hydro rates here in the province of Ontario yet again making it more unaffordable, which brings me to my next point. As the minister responsible for energy cavalierly suggests that the cancelled gas plants are a mere cup of coffee a year, I find that profound sense of entitlement has expanded into the rest of the government.

After rereading the Premier's answers from question period yesterday, I am left with far more questions. In fact, the closer the questions probed into what the Premier knew about the deleted hard drives and when she knew it, she decided to wave off to the government House leader.

Specifically, it is unclear to us why the Premier does not want to detail conversations that the chair of trans-

ition, Monique Smith, had either with her or with David Livingston.

Will the Premier offer her co-operation today and ensure the former McGuinty government House leader, chair of her transition team and envoy to Washington, Monique Smith, will return to this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The Premier has been extremely co-operative when it comes to the issue of the gas plants. I can tell you as House leader that it was the new Premier who directed me to work with the opposition to establish the justice committee with a broad mandate. It can, as members know, meet at the call of the Chair, meaning it has absolute freedom when to meet. And like any committee of this Legislature, it can call forward witnesses. There's a process in place to schedule them, and they have certain powers and authorities if people do not want to be forthcoming.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that in terms of this government, the Minister of Energy has been there several times, I've been in front of the committee, other ministers have been, and most importantly, the Premier has been twice in front of the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I asked the Acting Premier if Monique Smith would appear before our committee and if she would recall her from Washington. I did not hear an answer. But I did hear the government House leader tell us that they have expanded the role of the committee.

Right now, the committee is trying to do its work and government members are filibustering. Therefore, after my leads, I will have to go back down to that committee, because they refuse to allow us to sit next week. That's what is going on in their committee.

Yesterday, Peter Wallace said, "I indicated that for the successful Premier, there would be a series of challenges, and these challenges were already ... known."

A little later he said, "With reference to the gas plants, we would distinguish and we would talk to them about the records of which the Ontario public service was particularly concerned, which is the requests made by legislative committees."

I ask the Acting Premier: When did Monique Smith tell the Premier about David Livingston's plan to delete the hard drives so that these records would not be made available?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member needs to be very, very careful. There is an active OPP investigation. Coming in here and throwing as much mud as possible and seeing what sticks is not an advisable strategy.

We have co-operated fully with the committee. Members of the government who have been called have made themselves available. I am certain that Monique Smith, as an employee of this government, will make herself available and work with the committee to schedule an appearance.

But if the honourable member wants to talk about the committee, we are still waiting for the Conservative candidates to come before the committee. I'll have to check my notes, but I believe one candidate has been asked 16 times to come forward, and refused. We have a number of questions for him about the Progressive Conservatives' promise to cancel the gas plants in the last election.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would remind the government House leader: It is not the Progressive Conservative Party under OPP investigation; it is members of his party that are under an OPP investigation for deleted emails and the destruction of documents with respect to a \$1.1-billion gas plant cancellation scandal that saved their finance minister's seat and four other seats in a minority Parliament, that struck to the very heart of our democracy in this province.

If he wants to talk about co-operating in the justice committee, he should have his members who are filibustering as I speak in this place to stand down, allow us to sit next week and bring Monique Smith into—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will come to order. The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order. I'm keeping track.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like you to stop. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member has been here for many years. She still hasn't learned that saying it louder doesn't make it more true.

The fact of the matter was, it was her party that had robocalls in the last election saying, "The only way to get rid of the gas plants is to vote Progressive Conservative." It was her party that was putting out tweets and press releases. And the pièce de résistance: It was her leader who went on YouTube to say that if he was elected Premier of this province, that gas plant—and he pointed to it, with a dramatic flourish—would be "done, done, done."

Every party of this House made the same promise. All we want to hear from their candidates is: What was their costing and what was—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order, along with everyone else.

New question.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Bonne Pâques to everyone in the Legislature.

My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, in six years now, my daughter will be learning how to drive. I can tell you, as for any parent, that will be a most frightening day. From the moment our kids are born, we all go to great lengths to ensure their health and safety, and the prospect of any child getting on the road for the first time, with all the dangers present, is a difficult reality for any parent to face. So many parents enrol their children in driver's ed to help them prepare.

However, the Star revealed today that the transportation ministry won't let the public know about unfit driving instructors who have had their licences revoked. Minister, since the Ministry of Transportation won't, will you stand up and act to ensure the safety of our young drivers?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Murray is not here. I'm actually pleased to try and respond to this question.

I think it's important to note that the Minister of Transportation takes the issue very seriously. There obviously is an issue related to the privacy commissioner, and there is a process under way which cannot be circumvented; it is before the commissioner. It's difficult to comment in a more substantial way. As we all do, we respect the people's right to privacy as well as the public's right to information.

A number of things are clear. A driving school must be licensed by the ministry in order to offer beginner driver education. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that the instructors they employ are being properly licensed. There is very close monitoring of the schools, and changes are made as necessary to keep the schools in line with provincial standards. It's important for consumers to make an informed choice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There is a list—thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: This is typical of the government; you ask a question about transportation and protecting consumer rights, and we get the Minister of Northern Mines answering the question. My next question for the Minister of Health will probably go to the Minister of Natural Resources to get an answer. It's ridiculous, this government.

Minister, our children are learning to drive. We put their safety in the hands of our driving instructors—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, you can heckle me, but why don't you answer the question next time?

Minister, we expect our children to learn to drive from someone who is professional and licensed by the government. Therefore, every parent puts their trust in the Minister of Transportation to ensure that people teaching our young drivers adhere to standards of conduct and bad instructors are removed.

The Toronto Star, for over a year, has been trying to obtain the names of roughly 300 instructors who have lost their licences. These instructors have lost their licences for reasons ranging from sexist and obscene language with students to selling alcohol and contraband cigarettes. The ministry will not act to protect our people.

Minister, why can't a parent find out which instructor has lost their licence because they visited a strip club during an in-car lesson?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the member should understand that the issue is in front of the privacy commissioner. It's certainly not appropriate for anybody to circumvent the process of the privacy commissioner. You would understand that, and obviously we need to respect that process.

The fact is, there is a list of approved drivers' education schools, as well as those whose status has been revoked, that is posted on the MTO website. That is there for all to see. Choosing a school from that list is the safest way, I think it's fair to say, to ensure that young drivers are being taught by approved schools and by licensed instructors.

This is an important issue, one that is taken seriously by the minister and, again, a process that's in front of the privacy commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I don't know why the minister herself could not read those notes to me and had to pass it off to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Minister, I understand why your government isn't transparent when it comes to the gas plants. You're looking out for your own skin. However, we're talking about the safety of our young drivers. At the very least, we expect the government to be open about that. In the world of the Internet, how is it possible there's not an online ministry database where parents can find out if their child's instructor is licensed or not?

It stuns me that this simple, common-sense approach eludes the ministry and this government.

Minister, does your ministry continue to fail our children?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, this is an issue that I think everyone takes seriously, and there is a process under way with the privacy commissioner. Minister Murray, were he here, would very much want to affirm the fact that we monitor driver education schools very closely and make changes, as necessary, to keep those schools in line with provincial standards.

Consumers are in a position to make an informed choice. There is a list of approved drivers' education schools, as well as those whose status has been revoked on the MTO website. Certainly, choosing a school from that list is the best way to ensure that young drivers are being taught by approved schools and licensed instructors.

Again, this is something that is under the purview and being looked at by the privacy commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

As innocent as it was, and to be consistent, I would ask and remind all members that you do not reference anyone's attendance in this House.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last summer, on the advice of Shawn Truax, the forensic coordinator for the province of Ontario, computers were seized from an off-site government office in Ottawa at 180 Elgin Street. When did the government learn of this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I can speak only for myself, as Minister of Government Services. I learned of this particular incident, or the details of it, this morning from the justice committee hearings. At the same time, I think members are aware there have been some media reports about the OPP undertaking their investigation.

I would remind the member again that, as minister, I have made sure that I have stayed out of the OPP investigation, and I would advise her to do the same thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, these were the government's own experts who feared that a computer was being accessed and potentially wiped clean. So this is not the OPP that I'm asking about. I'm asking about the government's own internal people. Surely the government's own experts briefed the minister responsible. Can the minister confirm that a briefing happened, and when?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there is and there was an active OPP investigation. I have been very forthcoming that, last summer, I had a discussion with my then deputy minister. He has since retired from the public service. He said, "As you know, there's an OPP investigation going on, and our ministry will be co-operating and doing some work with them. Do you wish to be brought up to speed? Do you wish to be briefed, what have you, on it?" I said, "Absolutely not. Myself and

members of my staff want to stay out of the OPP investigation. It would be entirely inappropriate for me to know any of the details of that."

But I did ask the deputy minister to make sure the ministry co-operated fully with the Ontario Provincial Police, as is appropriate.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Acting Premier tell us whether any staff from the Premier's office were using those computers in Ottawa?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I kind of anticipate this Perry Mason route that she's going down.

I think there was reference made to the member from Ottawa South today at committee. I would like to put on the record that the court document makes very clear that the ministry, in co-operating with the OPP, looked at a total of 52 hard drives, and, of those, they found that 24 of them had been accessed through these codes, which are, of course, the topic of this investigation. I can assure the leader of the third party that the member from Ottawa South, at that point, who was working in Ottawa for the Premier—his computer was not accessed using these codes.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Acting Premier—but I can tell you that the mocking of the opposition in the job they're trying to do to hold this government to account on a \$1.1-billion scandal looks very bad on the government House leader; looks very bad.

Can the Acting Premier tell us who was accessing those computers in Ottawa?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: What looks really bad, Mr. Speaker, is a leader of a political party who seems to be counselling the government to interfere in an OPP investigation and seems disappointed that we decided not to interfere in an OPP investigation.

The fact of the matter—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: The fact of the matter is that the OPP identified 24 computers that had been accessed. If the honourable member wants to consult the court document that was released, the list of the individuals who used those computers is right there. I understand that the committee was asked to confirm whether the member from Ottawa South's computer was one that had been accessed, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I consulted with officials, and it was not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I don't know about you, but I think there's a real duty that's called "ministerial responsibility" for a minister to know what is

happening within his own ministry. There's a dereliction of duty when it come to this minister.

Can the Acting Premier tell us what sort of information might have been found on those computers in Ottawa?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I think what looks bad is the leader of the third party, who is trying to conduct an OPP investigation here on the floor of the House.

What also looks bad is the leader of the NDP, who decides that playing these OPP games is more important than asking about health or about education or about transportation, or asking about the issues of the day.

The fact of the matter is that the court document is clear. There were a number of computers that were accessed through these codes, which are at the centre of the investigation. It even lists who they were. As to the details of the investigation, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to leave that to the Ontario Provincial Police, as is appropriate. I'm going to allow them to do their work, and I'm going to allow them to reach their own conclusions and not interfere, as the leader of the third party is suggesting I do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, only the Liberals could be so arrogant and out of touch as to consider the work the opposition is doing as being a game. It is not a game; it is our responsibility to do this work—our responsibility—and we take it seriously.

This government's story gets more remarkable by the day. They claim they don't know anything about the investigation that their own staff are running. They claim they hardly even know Dalton McGuinty anymore, and the other Liberals that they worked with for a decade.

And, if we're keeping track, they're also so surprised that cancelling the gas plants is going to cost \$1.1 billion, and I imagine they had no idea that Kathleen Wynne's signature was going to be ending up on that final deal. The people stuck paying the higher and higher hydro bills in this province aren't surprised at all.

When is this government going to start answering questions?

Hon. John Milloy: You know, maybe it's time the leader of the New Democratic Party got a little bit off her high horse. The advice to not interfere in an OPP investigation is not coming from me. It is coming from the Ontario Provincial Police, the same Ontario Provincial Police who recently appeared in front of the justice committee and said that the type of interference we're seeing here in this Legislature could in fact jeopardize the investigation.

The leader of the New Democratic Party cannot have it both ways. She cannot ask for the police to look into it and reach conclusions, and then come in here and interfere through inappropriate questions, by not dealing with the facts, and dealing with this issue the way she has. If anyone needs to apologize, Mr. Speaker, it's the leader of the New Democratic Party.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the finance minister. Yesterday, the Bank of Canada revised its growth outlook downward from 2.5% to 2.3%. It comes on the heels of a Fraser Institute report that concludes that Ontario is dragging down the rest of Canada's economy.

We know our revenues are down and will continue to go down. We also know you have a \$4.5-billion gap in the budget, the one that you kept secret from the financial community. Knowing all these shortfalls, your response is to go on a \$5.7-billion spending spree, just like the BLT document we exposed said you would.

Minister, Ontarians have figured it out: Your math simply does not add up. When are you going to come clean and admit to this Legislature that you have no plan to save Ontario from the trouble you got us into?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've had a budget that we presented last year that illustrated we had exceeded our targets year over year. In fact, last year, we not only did that, but we became the lowest-cost government because of the efforts that we've taken in terms of austerity. We've been very disciplined and determined in doing so.

I just provided a report at the fall economic update, telling the world as to where we stand, relative to our numbers, and again, we're on track to balance by 2017-18.

We then came forward with a long-term plan illustrating the very challenges before us, all the while recognizing that what we must do is invest in our future to ensure we have economic growth and greater prosperity.

The opposition members on the other side would rather we cut investments in health care and education, at the expense of the Ontario public, for their own personal gain. That is not what we're going to do. It's not about the fortunes of that political party. It's the fortunes of Ontario that we're most concerned about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We have already heard from the government's Minister of Transportation that they will be cutting health and education, so we already know where those cuts are coming from—as well as seeing a flagrant disregard that this government has for taxpayers' money, and of course, Minister, by that I mean the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, spent to save your very seat—all this when Ontario's per-person GDP is 5.6% lower than the rest of Canada.

We now have the third-lowest rate of private sector job creation in the country. Our annual growth in business investment is barely half of the rest of Canada's. And your answer? You go on a spending spree while raising hydro rates and raising taxes.

All the experts tell us that if Ontario adopts smarter policies—that's lower hydro rates and lower taxes—we could improve our economy.

Minister, will your budget reverse the disastrous path you've been leading us down?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario has actually had 180% of jobs return to this province since the depths of the recession. We have taken steps necessary to grow our economy and create jobs.

Our budget coming forward on May 1 at 4 o'clock, in this very Legislature, will talk specifically about those measures, measures which the opposition fail to recognize. They fail to recognize that what we must do now is continue to invest in our economy, ensure that we have an open and dynamic business climate to attract those investments, because the companies, especially small businesses, are the job creators. We are talking about more opportunity for all Ontarians, and our government will continue to do just that.

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Furthermore, as we grow and invest in our economy, contrary to what they would prefer on that side, which is to do across-the-board cuts and put in jeopardy that recovery, we will continue to stand behind those businesses and the Ontario public.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Liberals have a long record of promising everything and delivering nothing. It's happening again on transit for Kitchener-Waterloo. On March 18, the Liberals promised all-day, two-way GO service, but gave us no timeline. Then, they changed their mind and told us that GO express rail won't serve Kitchener at all. Instead, the minister cooked up a new scheme to build high-speed rail in 10 years. And now, a senior vice-president with GO tells us that we are lucky to have just four trains a day.

Two-way, all-day GO? High-speed rail? Or just four trains for the people of Kitchener-Waterloo?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very out of breath but very happy to be here.

We are moving right now on track acquisition, as the member knows—very advanced. We're in the final stages. We will soon own 80% of the track to Kitchener-Waterloo. These have been very difficult negotiations. I'm very excited.

We are moving on two-way, all-day GO, in spite of the federal government cutting back Via at the same time that we're increasing it. And we're going to have high-speed rail to Kitchener, running at 320 kilometres—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Not just Kitchener.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: London and Kitchener.

And we are, over the next decade, going to transform the transportation system in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Perhaps the problem is that the minister doesn't understand what two-way, all-day means. It means that 10,000 people who live in Toronto can get to Kitchener-Waterloo in the morning, because that's where there are jobs. And then the people from

Kitchener-Waterloo can actually get to Toronto all day long. Right now, there are four trains.

It's clear the Liberals have lost their way. They'll promise everything and deliver nothing, because they focus on keeping their own jobs rather than creating jobs for Ontarians. The cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph have been clear. They're calling for full-day, two-way GO train service on the Kitchener line. Even the government admits all-day GO will create 33,000 jobs. But instead of working with our community to fund the local plan, the Liberals are busy promising everything else to distract from their own record of waste—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Education will come to order. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. You're not helping.

Wrap up, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There are 33,000 jobs at play, but instead of working with our community to fund the local plan, the Liberals are busy promising everything else to distract from their own record of waste, delay and mismanagement. Why are you refusing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for the friendly question, and I want to ask her if she can take yes for an answer.

I'm going to be very clear. We are doing all-day, two-way GO. That's already under way. We already have trains running that will be—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, it is happening. Expenditures have been made for years. They're accelerating. I meet with Carl Zehr, Ken Seiling, Mayor Fontana and Mayor Farbridge. My friends John Milloy, Liz Sandals, Deb Matthews—we have been working with these community and business leaders for a year—not just consulting; working with them. They want high-speed rail. They're getting four stations; access to Pearson Airport in under half an hour; about an hour and 10 minutes from London, downtown to Pearson—320-kilometre-an-hour trains, Canadian technology. We're kicking butt. We're getting it done.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Labour. For many community groups and organizations, April 16 marks—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop. The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order—second time—and the member from Trinity—Spadina.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence can just—I don't need your help.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Equal Pay Day is recognized in countries around the world, including the United States, Australia and member states of the European Union. Yesterday we became the first province in Canada to recognize this important reminder of the gender pay gap.

As you may know, this date was chosen by community groups to represent the amount of extra days per year, on average, that women must work annually to match the annual earnings of men.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister tell this House, and women in my riding and across Ontario, what your ministry is doing to improve the position of women in the workplace and to improve pay equity in the province?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the fine member from Scarborough–Guildwood for the great question. Our government recognizes the valuable contribution that women make in making a more equal, a more just and a more prosperous society right here in Ontario.

I know that in the supplementary, the minister responsible for women's issues can speak more broadly to the investments that have been made to improve the status of women in Ontario. But let me say I'm very proud that my ministry is taking action to improve the status quo of all workers, including women, by proposing changes to labour legislation to help vulnerable workers and by increasing the minimum wage.

I would also like to commend our employees at the Pay Equity Office for the hard work they have undertaken in investigating, settling and resolving complaints related to the compensation of employees in what are traditionally female-dominated occupations.

There is always more to be done. That's why we have asked the Pay Equity Office to hold a round table to discuss ways to address the gender wage gap, and I was really happy to be part of that discussion. I look forward to some excellent advice from them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I know that our government has taken a very important step by increasing the minimum wage. With the majority of minimum wage earners being women, this increase has a direct impact.

I am also proud that we are helping women in the workplace by strengthening workplace protections. I know that the Pay Equity Office, as the minister said, is working very hard when it comes to advising employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities. However, even with all of these important initiatives, the gender wage gap still exists.

Through you, Speaker, will the minister share what our government is doing to address this wage disparity and ensure that women can participate fully in the economy?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for allowing me the second part to the question, and thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for the question on this issue as well.

I would like to first thank the Pay Equity Commission for the round table that they hosted yesterday that myself and the Minister of Labour attended. We look forward to the recommendations that come from that.

Our government has taken action. We have taken concrete actions to improve women's economic status and help close the gender wage gap—a lot more than has been done in the past. We have demonstrated this commitment by helping women access better jobs, through major investments in education, training programs and the Pay Equity Commission. Thousands of women have been provided with training and education for better jobs.

Our government is also investing significantly in child care and full-day kindergarten. We will continue to work hard to break down all of these barriers for the women of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, since you have been in power, the Auditor General has released special reports investigating Ornge air ambulance, the Mississauga gas plant and the Oakville gas plant. In all three of these cases, the flow of public funds to indirect recipients and third party service providers was outside the current mandate of the Provincial Auditor.

Acting Premier, do you agree that the Auditor General should be given the tools to do their job and ensure that taxpayers are getting fair value for their money?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I know that the honourable member has a private member's bill which is before the Legislature this afternoon, and I think all of us look forward to the debate and the discussion.

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I think all of us recognize the important role that is played by the Auditor General. We also anticipate a very important role by the Financial Accountability Officer. At the same time, we do have to balance that with the appropriateness of going too far when it comes to those who are merely dealing with the government and not part of the government. That is the balance, I think, that will be the topic of debate of this afternoon. I can certainly say that on our side of the Legislature we're looking forward to hearing the debate and the presentation from the member, as well as participating in it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again, to the Acting Premier: A number of audits are currently in progress, including a review of the community care access centres, smart-meter usage and the winter roads maintenance program. These investigations all involve public money flowing to third party organizations.

Acting Premier, my private member's bill will allow the Auditor General to follow the money to third party recipients to help complete these audits and make sure taxpayers are getting good value for their money.

Acting Premier, will you support Bill 190 when it is debated for second reading this afternoon and give the Auditor General the tools to do the job?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's important that we all recognize the need for greater transparency and greater accountability. It's one of the reasons that we, in this House—on this side of the House—have taken numerous steps to do so.

In fact, C.D. Howe Institute has recognized that the government of Ontario has become one of the most transparent and one of the most accountable governments anywhere in Canada. We have been rated top in the country because of the integrity of our numbers.

We recognize the important work that the Auditor General does. It's one of the reasons we brought forward the Financial Accountability Officer to ensure that we get not only an Auditor General looking at the past results, but also making certain that going forward we institute proper systems to ensure that integrity continues. We're doing that in treasury board. We're doing that with our sub-treasury board committee. We will continue to act responsibly for the benefit of the public good, and taxpayers' value will be protected.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Liberals continue to insist that they want openness and transparency in the waste of the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal and in the deletion and wiping of emails and hard drives. But today their actions tell a different story. Today they tried to stop the justice committee from sitting. Ontarians deserve answers, and they did not let this happen today. Why did the Liberal members spend the morning trying to stop the justice committee from sitting?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to bring the honourable member and, in fact, all members of the Legislature up to speed. The fact of the matter is that the justice committee has decided to sit next week, Wednesday morning and afternoon and Thursday afternoon.

What members may find a little bit curious, and perhaps members of the press or the public, is: How could the committee meet during question period? The fact of the matter is that the committee has that power and authority. The reason why it has that power and authority is because I, as House leader, negotiated with the opposition on the direction of the Premier, who said she wanted the committee to have that sort of responsibility to undertake to sit when it felt it was in the best interest, and we are going to see it hold a number of hearings next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Well, just to inform the government House leader, I was actually in the committee, and members of the Liberal Party voted against sitting an additional week. They voted against that. So their actions tell a different story.

They talk about getting answers on the gas plants, but they said no to a public inquiry. They talked about being transparent and open, but they voted against sitting additional days in the justice committee.

Why is the government saying one thing about accountability and transparency but doing another? Why are they voting against transparency? Why are they against accountability?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, we have a justice committee—and it may sound arcane, but it meets at the call of the Chair. What that means is that it is up to the committee to decide when it meets. I would also advise members of the Legislature, if they haven't noticed: There are more of the opposition than the government—more of them than us—which essentially means the opposition is helping to drive the agenda of this committee.

But, at the same time, I think all of us would agree, let's let the committee undertake its own work. I would ask the honourable member, as this is question period—I'm very, very surprised that he has no issues about education or health care or a variety of issues that he wants to raise in the House today. But I'm always happy to answer questions about committee procedure.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour la procureure générale, M^{me} la ministre Madeleine Meilleur.

I believe that aboriginal representation and access to justice are important issues across Ontario. As you will know, Speaker, and as former Speaker Peters will know, Mr. Frank Iacobucci released a report recently that outlines important recommendations lighting the path to increased aboriginal representation in the justice system. I understand that the Ministry of the Attorney General has established an implementation committee to address Mr. Iacobucci's recommendations and has announced the co-chairs of the justice advisory group to provide advice to the Attorney General on broader justice issues affecting First Nations.

My question is this: Will the Attorney General inform this chamber about the steps we are taking to fortify, solidify and strengthen the relationship between aboriginal peoples and the justice system?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his question. Mr. Yakubuski's report has helped the ministry build on its ongoing efforts to improve participation of First Nations individuals on jury rolls and strengthen our province's justice system overall.

We have created a position of assistant deputy Attorney General for aboriginal justice, and this individual will be recruited through an open, merit-based process beginning this month. This is the first recommendation to be implemented in consultation with the jury review implementation committee formed in September 2013 to oversee the implementation of recommendations in Mr. Yakubuski's report. I want to take this opportunity to thank Judge Yakubuski's for his wonderful report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre réponse sur la contribution de M. Iacobucci.

I sense that our government is taking meaningful steps towards effecting real, positive change in the way that First Nations participate in Ontario's justice system, specifically in enhancing participation on juries. We know, for example, that throughout Ontario, First Nations peoples are significantly underrepresented, not just on juries but among all those who work in the administration of justice: court officials, prosecutors, defence counsel and judges. Can the minister expand on how moving forward on these particular recommendations will help build inclusive and respectful relationships with our partners in the aboriginal communities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: The addition of an assistant deputy Attorney General, aboriginal justice, is a critical step in addressing the aboriginal justice issues. It fulfills a key recommendation of the Justice Iacobucci report. It will do three things, this new position:

(1) The position will strengthen the relationships between aboriginal communities and government.

(2) It will improve trust and understanding amongst aboriginal and non-aboriginal people and communities.

(3) It will lead to new supports and programs for aboriginal peoples.

As a part of the effort to find the best possible candidate for this position, the recruitment process will include extensive outreach to aboriginal organizations and communities across Canada. My colleague the Attorney General and I will continue to move forward in implementing the recommendations of the report. We will continue to work to ensure that First Nations are adequately represented in Ontario's justice system.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Attorney General. My private member's resolution called on the government to implement a comprehensive, long-term solution to reform joint and several liability insurance for municipalities, and to do it by this June. It received overwhelming support from AMO, from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, from insurers in Perth-Wellington and beyond, and from over 200 municipalities. Support continues to pour in. It was debated and it received overwhelming support from MPPs from all parties.

That was almost two months ago. Since you became Attorney General, what action have you taken on this file and when will you get it done?

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Legal liability reform is an important and complex issue. I understand that this issue has been a significant concern of municipalities for some time.

AMO has asked the government to consider the impact of the law of joint and several liability on municipal

insurance. The Ministry of the Attorney General has worked with AMO to develop possible ways to address municipal concerns. MAG is in the process of consulting with AMO and the legal community on two options under consideration.

The consultation period has been extended. It's expected to be concluded on Thursday, April 16, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: With all due respect, that's the same answer I heard four years ago when I was a councillor in North Perth. That hasn't changed.

Speaker, I know this minister is new to the job, but we need to know when she will make this happen. Her government has been promising reform for years, but they have never made it a priority. I hope she will do better.

AMO and many municipalities are—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister without portfolio, you can't hopscotch-heckle. I hear you wherever you are.

Finish, please.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: AMO and many municipalities are supporting a combined model, which would place reasonable limits on the damages that could be recovered from a municipality. In Perth-Wellington, municipalities, including Stratford and the county of Wellington, are asking you to support this.

Minister, the time for consultations is over. When will you respect the will of the House? Time is running out.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As the member said, there are some municipalities who are supporting it and some who are not supporting it.

We have been examining models used in other jurisdictions. We have examined a model used in the United States in particular. They have a wide range of approaches. Proportionate liability, in which each defendant is only liable for the proportion of damage he or she has caused, is controversial, because it can mean that a seriously injured plaintiff has to absorb a significant loss. We have looked at what is done in Saskatchewan.

As I said, we are consulting, we are working with the officials in my ministry. We will inform the member later on.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Niagara region has one of the highest unemployment rates in Ontario. City councillors in St. Catharines unanimously passed a motion to develop a jobs and investment strategy by co-operating with the Niagara region, other municipalities and the Niagara Industrial Association. We met with Niagara businesses that support the NDP's plan of a targeted tax credit to create jobs.

Niagara regional leaders are taking their own measures to do what this government should be doing: creating a jobs plan that works. Will this government

finally admit that its across-the-board corporate tax cuts aren't creating jobs, and tell regional leaders in Niagara how it will support their jobs strategy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It's important to understand that Niagara is facing challenges unique to that region partly because of dependence, in the past and the present, on the manufacturing sector. It's refreshing as well to see the hard work being done by the citizens there and political and business leaders. In fact, the economic development corporations for the region as a whole have recently, quite exceptionally, increased their coordination. They understand that by collaborating, they can actually compete even better as a region.

Although the unemployment rate in the Niagara region, I acknowledge, is unacceptably high, it has come down considerably over the past year, and certainly since the height of the recession. It is benefiting from the job-creating initiatives this government is making, as we see that unemployment rate come down and we see the growth in manufacturing jobs once again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Manufacturers in Niagara are saying they are in danger of being poached by the states across the border. Low power costs in New York state generated by Hydro One and sold at an enormous loss are being used to lure Niagara companies away. An industrial consumer in New York can purchase electricity from Ontario 30% to 45% lower than a competing company in our province.

Will this government fix its broken hydro system that is increasing hydro bills for Ontarians and, more importantly, driving manufacturing jobs out of Niagara and into the States?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member needs to get his facts up to speed. We had a broken system. We now have a system that creates a surplus. We are now using that strong position in the electricity system to create a program called the IEI Program. That creates energy for people who are creating jobs at about 50% of the regular rate. We've just announced seven across the province, including in Welland, Pembroke and Renfrew. We've created 140 jobs by using this program to restart a paper plant that had been stopped.

We're across-the-board competitive with our industrial programs, and we're going to continue to evolve them. We're competitive with northern States; we're competitive with other provinces in the industrial sector.

I invite the member to come to my office, and we'll review all the programs for him and the benefits for the industrial sector.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. For many seniors, physiotherapy can be the key to a full and active

life. Whether it's getting out of the house to get groceries, taking part in exercise and sports or simply taking a stroll with their grandchildren, thousands of older Ontarians benefit from the hard work and attentive care of our physiotherapists.

That's why so many people in Vaughan were concerned about the changes that our government made to the delivery of physiotherapy this past summer. Many spoke to me and wondered what this would mean for them. Would it interrupt their care? Would it make it harder for them to access services?

Yesterday, I had the distinct pleasure of announcing that our government will be investing \$800,000 to support the addition of four new publicly funded physiotherapy clinics in my riding of Vaughan. I know how important this will be for so many living in my community.

Could the minister please tell the House just how this investment will benefit seniors in Vaughan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for Vaughan. I tell you: He is a passionate advocate for seniors in his community. I agree with the member that physiotherapy does help ensure that older Ontarians lead healthy, active lives.

Before we moved forward with our plan to improve physiotherapy for Ontarians, seniors in many communities simply had no access to publicly funded clinic-based physiotherapy services, and waiting lists for home-based physiotherapy were far too long. Now, we're more than doubling the number of publicly funded physiotherapy clinics in the province. That means 90,000 more Ontarians will be able to receive clinic-based physiotherapy in their communities.

In Vaughan, our investment will provide access to physiotherapy services to over 2,000 individuals. At the same time, we're funding community care access centres to provide in-home physiotherapy to 60,000 more people across the province. This will help increase access—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for her answer, and I thank her for acknowledging the work that takes place in my community of Vaughan, regarding supporting seniors.

Just a couple of Fridays ago, the minister responsible for seniors and the Premier of Ontario were in my riding at the Healthy Seniors Roundtable discussing issues of importance to seniors in my community. More than 700 showed up for that event, and I think they were delighted to hear about the work we're doing through the minister responsible and the Premier.

There's a growing aging population in Vaughan, as there is in communities across the province. Ontario's aging population will put an increasing strain on health care resources in years to come. I know that the Minister of Health has taken very strong and meaningful steps to ensure the successful delivery of the Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital, something that's very important to me and to my community, but there is a growing recognition that

health promotion is vital to helping prevent people from going to the hospital in the first place or being readmitted after discharge. Could the minister please speak about other investments being made in Vaughan to help keep our seniors out of the emergency room?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is absolutely right in saying that the Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital will be delivered on time, and I can tell you that he has been pushing that project forward. But I think we all agree that we must do all we can to keep people out of the hospital in the first place. That's why, this year, we increased our investment in home and community care by 6% to ensure that seniors can get high-quality care close to home. We're creating community health links to provide collaborative care for the most complex patients.

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As part of our physiotherapy reforms, we're expanding community exercise and falls prevention classes to more locations across Ontario. We will be able to offer this free, publicly funded service to 130,000 seniors, including 10,000 in the Central LHIN, in the member's area.

We will continue to work hard to ensure that older Ontarians are able to lead healthy, active and independent lives in their own homes.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, as you are well aware, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology was first established on the basis of a new model with Durham College, utilizing a shared-services aspect for their facilities and operations.

This worked well at the start; however, subsequent leadership at UOIT did not have the desire to allow the shared-services model to continue. The end result is the splitting of the services, and Durham College had to pay over \$3.2 million in additional unbudgeted costs, only to have UOIT rehire Durham's severed staff. Minister, it's happening again, and this time the taxpayers and Durham College are anticipating paying an additional half a million dollars or more.

Minister, can you commit to review the Durham College/UOIT operations and have all players act in the best interests of the taxpayers and in the original intent of the agreement?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member. This is one of those questions I'm actually happy to get in this Legislature, unlike many others that we often get. The reason why I'm happy to get it is that it gives me an opportunity to say, through the Legislature, to both Durham College and UOIT that it's really important that they do everything they can to work together and ensure that that partnership—which actually is a fantastic model for the rest of the province—remains successful.

My job isn't to micromanage these partnerships or micromanage these arrangements, but my job is to put forward an expectation to all parties that they're going to

do everything they can to work in the best interests of students.

The member has raised the issue with me in the past. I've been to Durham College just recently and met with Don Lovisa there and did a tour of the college. It is a fantastic partnership; it's a great model. It appears that there might be some more work to do, and I think both of us need to make sure that they do the work they need to, to make the partnership work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, the process is continuing on, and quite frankly, there is a lot of concern that the IT division may be next on the block for the shared-services aspect.

This substantially impacts not only the union membership, who are working under Durham College, but they then have to move over to UOIT. In the case that they don't move over, where do these individuals end up? Not only that, but there is also the impact on the budget of Durham College, as they are the ones holding the original contract.

Minister, can you ensure that the best interests of the union workers, who are working on behalf of Durham College and UOIT—as well as that the impacts on the budget are minimized?

Hon. Brad Duguid: My expectation of all of our post-secondary partners is that they're going to be fair in everything they do. My other expectation is that everything they do is being done in the interests of their students.

First and foremost, I have a responsibility, and I think we all do, to see our post-secondary system through the eyes of our students. I know, when going out there—and I may have a bit of a conflict here, Mr. Speaker, because my son, I think, has applied to and is accepting to go to Durham College, and that's one of the reasons I was out there. So I may have a bit of a conflict here. But what amazes me about that campus is the interaction between the university students and the college students, and the programs where you can start in Durham College and work your way up into a university program.

It is a fantastic model. It's really important that we all work together to make sure it continues to work in the best interests of students. Thanks for the question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The government has announced that the ONTC refurbishment shops in North Bay will remain in public hands, but it has failed to outline a long-term growth plan for the division. In fact, it announced the refurbishment of the Polar Bear Express as a way to revitalize that division, but that's only a part-time job. It won't provide enough employment for the future of the refurbishment shops. This casts doubt on the government's intentions for ONTC.

Will this government act to ensure that a real strategic plan is outlined for ONTC's future, and the services and the good local jobs it provides?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. I really do appreciate it. Certainly, I was very pleased to be in North Bay a couple of Fridays ago to announce that indeed we are keeping four of the five divisions of the ONTC in public hands, and that does include the refurbishment shop. We're very pleased that we are able to provide \$17.6 million in work in terms of improving the Polar Bear Express refurbishment, rail freight as well and, obviously, the motor coach as well. We are conscious that, indeed, there is more work to be done in terms of the transformation of those divisions that will be held in public hands. That does include opportunities—we see synergies with Metrolinx, and we're hoping that will be an opportunity. In fact, it's an opportunity we are planning to have more serious discussions about very, very soon.

This is part of a longer-term plan. The commitment is very strong in terms of keeping those lines in public hands. We look forward to further discussions to continue that transformation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Minister, the people in north-eastern Ontario have been waiting two years. They've united—you've started the MAC committee. The MAC committee has done a lot of good work, work for a long-term plan, and what we got was an announcement to refurbish part of the ONTC's own railcars. That was announced as the strategic plan to save the refurbishment shops. That's not a plan; that's an announcement.

We don't want to hear talk about a plan. We want to hear that there is going to be a strategic alliance with Metrolinx. You could do that; they're both public companies. That was the start, when they lost that contract years ago. That's when we realized what you were trying to do with the ONTC.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Fair game. We are very, very committed to a long-term plan. I know you don't want to in any way minimize the hard work that was done by the ministerial advisory committee, because indeed they have—indeed, this is part of a full transformation. May I say, the ministerial advisory committee is going to stay in place. I asked each of the members, when we made the announcement related to the four lines staying in public hands, “Will you stay on the MAC board? Will you meet again?” We have more work to do.

There is work we want to do in terms of a strategic alliance with Metrolinx. That work needs to get done. We need to put forward a real business plan that will make it work. We recognize that. I guess most of all what I want to say is, we are so committed to a long-term transformation of the ONTC and a sustainable one. I want you to know that, indeed, that work will continue with all the

advice we'll be getting from the MAC and others like yourself.

CYCLING POLICIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, western Mississauga's neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville are perfect places to cycle in the good weather—if that good weather ever comes—on our very many biking trails. Cycling is part of a healthy lifestyle. In Mississauga, we are very, very active cyclists.

Would the minister please tell me what his just recently announced investment in cycling in Ontario entails? What can we expect for cycling as Ontario rolls out the program?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First, I want to thank the member for his leadership as a cycling advocate. His private member's bill on Bike Month is going to be very important to this House.

What we have done is, we've set up a fund for \$25 million over the next three years. This will fund municipalities and our partners, the not-for-profits, in building new models of cycling infrastructure and innovation, whether it's in Ottawa, Chatham or Ignace. Every community right now is embracing this.

But it actually leads to a much bigger story, which is that, going forward, our entire \$14-billion-a-year infrastructure budget will include cycling facilities on every road, highway, bridge and hospital. So we will become, we believe, in the next decade, the most cycling-friendly jurisdiction in North America.

I want to thank the member for his question.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, we have guests: Mr. Gerry Baier from the Institute of Future Legislators in the University of British Columbia as a guest of the former member from Elgin—Middlesex—London in the 37th, 38th and 39th and Speaker in the 39th, Steve Peters.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to correct my record. In my answer to the member for Perth—Wellington, apparently I said “Justice Yakabuski” when I meant “Justice Iacobucci.” I would not want my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to be too excited. I have not yet appointed him to the bench.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa South on a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: I do want to add that I left out Isabella's grandmother Gerri O'Brien and her parents, Rob O'Brien and Angela Ceccato.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A year ago, I presented documents proving the government knew its ONTC fire sale would indeed cost \$800 million. So for a year, the Liberals left northern families in turmoil, when they knew all along that they would not proceed with this folly.

Now they've re-announced a phony strategic alliance with Metrolinx. It's exactly the one they announced just days before the 2011 election; the one that never did go ahead. Sadly, this is another Liberal pre-election vote-getter, just like the gas plant announcement.

North Bay city council passed a motion last week asking the government to reconsider the Ontera sale. Northerners deserve to know: How much did it actually cost to divest Ontera; what return did the government get for the more than \$20 million they invested in the fibre ring; and what will the cancellation fee be if the CRTC nixes the sale?

Just as concerning is what wasn't mentioned. There was no reference to the Ring of Fire in the government's announcement, but only days later, the finance minister told reporters in London that London's rail expertise will be put to use in the Ring of Fire.

This is an alarm bell for northerners. It's clear that the Liberals can't be trusted. We've presented our plan for Ontario Northland. We'll only achieve victory for the north when we change the team that leads this province.

PASSOVER

Mr. Mike Colle: This week, many of my constituents in Eglinton-Lawrence will be celebrating the holiday of Passover. During Passover Seder, families get together to remember and celebrate the liberation of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt.

Each year, the ancient story of the Exodus from Egypt is passed down by families to their children and grandchildren.

Passover truly is a holiday about freedom. The ancient story of the Israelites' liberation and their transition from slavery to freedom is one we can all relate to.

I want to wish the entire Jewish community across Ontario—hundreds of thousands—a happy and healthy Pesach with lots of gefilte fish, horseradish and chicken soup with matzo balls.

Chag Sameach to all my Jewish friends and constituents.

This is a very special family time of the year when all of us reflect on the incredible tenacity and incredible stick-to-it-iveness of the Jewish community, not only here in Ontario but across the world, who survived slavery in Egypt and have contributed to the growth of this great province, where they've been for over 200 years helping build this province.

So I say to all my Jewish friends and neighbours, Chag Sameach, and may you have a wonderful and peaceful Pesach.

Happy Easter to everybody, too.

NORTHUMBERLAND CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my pleasure to rise and speak about the Northumberland Child Development Centre. For decades, this organization has served communities in my riding with integrity and excellence. But, unfortunately, they will no longer be able to do so, because they are being passed over for the funding they typically receive from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The decision was made to give the funding, instead, to a new company that will offer the service for a small discount. This tiny bit of savings comes at the expense of the priceless relationships these workers have built with their clients over the past 20 years. This is 20 years of friendship, accountability and trust that is simply being thrown out the window so this financially incompetent government can try to save a few bucks.

This government never seems to want to cut spending, but the rare times that they do, they do it in all the wrong places. Instead of trimming down the subsidies they're giving out to billion-dollar corporations like MLSE, they cut funding to developmental services for children. It just doesn't make sense.

This industry relies on the importance of established relationships built on trust. These families who have been clients for the NCDC for the past 20 years have that, and now are going to have to start all over again.

Premier Wynne, please say developmental services is a priority for your government. Do it today, and continue the good work at the NCDC.

RONCESVALLES POLISH FESTIVAL

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today, in a proud way, to herald the work of the Ronesvalles Polish Festival. Every year, the Polish festival grows. Usually, about 300,000 people attend it. It's a wonderful event. I know many here have attended that.

This year, they asked the Liberal government for \$83,000. They received \$58,000. Last year, they received \$75,000. This is a huge blow to the organizers and to my entire community.

The sad reality is that most people believe the erroneous report, for example, that the Beach festival got their funding allocated. They did not. The \$75,000, that was erroneously reported in the press, that was given to the

Beach festival had nothing to do with their request for the sustenance of the festival itself.

So I'm standing up here, pleading with my friends across the aisle, pleading with the minister who's responsible for this portfolio: Please fund the Roncesvalles Polish Festival. I ask on behalf of our Polish residents and all of our residents. We're asking for just a few thousand dollars that generate millions of dollars in terms of tourist revenue. Please fund the Roncesvalles Polish Festival. I don't know how else to say it. I'm going to say it again: Please fund the Roncesvalles Polish Festival.

ORGAN DONATION

Ms. Soo Wong: April is Trillium Gift of Life Network's Be a Donor Month. I would once again like to draw attention to the importance of organ donation. Speaker, as you know, out of the 1,500 people in Ontario waiting for a life-saving organ transplant, one dies every three days because a needed organ is not available.

As a registered nurse, I'm aware that one donor has the capacity to save eight lives. Local associations, working in partnership with the Trillium Gift of Life Network, are crucial in bringing this cause to the forefront. The Scarborough Gift of Life Association, led by my friend and donor recipient Mohan Bissoondial, is working hard to raise the percentage of registered donors in Scarborough, which is significantly below the provincial average, at a mere 10%.

Mohan himself is a double corneal transplant recipient. Every time I speak to Mohan, he always tells me, "The generosity of strangers who are willing to donate their corneas has enabled me to live a full and complete life and to bring up a family and live my dreams."

Be a Donor Month is a wonderful opportunity for communities across the province to help increase awareness of organ donor registration and help save lives. Speaker, I encourage anyone who has not registered yet to do so online at beadonor.ca.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today because of the government's decision, which took effect last August, to drastically cut physiotherapy services to seniors. It's having a direct result of increased falls and injury to our most vulnerable population.

Let me briefly explain what I'm hearing from my constituents in my riding. Seniors who once had access to services in-home now struggle to travel to community clinics, as there is no public transit available. I think our urban Premier forgets that while seniors in Toronto have lots of accessible options, it's not the same in rural Ontario.

Seniors in retirement homes are also struggling. In six months, falls have more than doubled. One retirement home has seen the rate of falls increase 158%. This increase has a direct human cost and is resulting in a loss of independence.

A local case study shows a decrease in mobility as a result of reduced one-on-one physiotherapy sessions. One

resident in the study has had her mobility decline to the point that she is now unable to feed herself. Another resident broke a hip as a result of loss of muscle strength and balance.

The activity director of one local retirement home has said, "Following the cuts, the most vulnerable seniors have fallen, fractured hips and continue to lose independence and dignity, just to save the provincial government a few bucks. It is obvious to us here in the retirement home, by the numbers of increased falls and a death, that the falls prevention classes are not working."

I find it outrageous that the government wastes billions of dollars on scandals and is willing to spend another \$5.7 billion in the next few days to distract voters from their lousy record in an effort to cling to power—and have no money for seniors.

1310

VETERANS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I would like to take a couple of moments, if I could, to pay tribute to our war veterans. As you know, earlier this week, we received our Vimy pin, reminding us of the great sacrifices that were made during the First World War, when Canada's military came of age. Fittingly, next Friday, in Windsor at Memorial Park, we are rededicating the monument to the First World War veterans.

Interestingly, a couple of years ago, it had been vandalized. A young teenager from the community saw that and went out with some cleaning materials and cleaned off the graffiti. He was recognized for his efforts on behalf of the veterans in our community.

Also, one of our firefighters, a few years ago, decided we should do more, because in that community some of the streets have military names—Ypres for some, Vimy, Dieppe, various battles—and we put a poppy on the street signs in Windsor for all of the war-related battles that were fought and streets named after them.

I'll be taking part in that ceremony on Friday. I look forward to that. I had my nomination meeting at my Legion. I've been a member for about 30 years. I signed the daily book and the loonie book and the toonie book, and I won \$370 last week, so I'm even more proud to stand up and support veterans today.

ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL DISASTER

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Mr. Speaker, 28 years ago, on April 26, 1986, in the north central part of Ukraine, 100 kilometres north of Kiev, near Chernobyl and Pripyat, a nuclear explosion considered the worst nuclear power plant incident in history occurred. Classified at the highest level 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale, it was a catastrophic event where 600,000 people were exposed to high-level radiation, and many died.

This plant was under the direct jurisdiction of the central authorities of the Soviet Union. Quoting Medvedev,

"The mere fact that the operators were carrying out an experiment that had not been approved by higher officials indicates that something was wrong with the chain of command.... In part, the tragedy was the product of administrative anarchy or the attempt to keep everything secret." And there is talk of building a nuclear facility in the Crimea.

As concerned citizens, we must be vigilant. In this difficult time, we must remember and we must stand with the people of Ukraine. We must be firm in our convictions to support the people in their struggle for democracy and territorial integrity.

Prime Minister Harper has stated that the world must recognize that Russia's activities in Ukraine pose the worst threat to global peace since the end of the Cold War. "The situation is getting worse," he said. "Without any doubt whatsoever," this is "strictly the work of Russian provocateurs sent by the Putin regime."

Mr. Speaker, all of us must be vigilant.

RALPH AND SUSAN SGRO

Mrs. Jane McKenna: A healthy community is, at heart, a caring place. That is true of my riding and two constituents in particular: Ralph and Susan Sgro. I'm very pleased to report that the couple was recently named 2014 Philanthropists of the Year by the Burlington Community Foundation.

Long-time Burlington residents, the pair own a number of McDonald's franchises in the Burlington area and have given to a range of charities, both personally and corporately. Seven years ago, working in partnership with the Burlington Community Foundation, they founded the McDonald's Restaurants of Burlington Fund, which supports local children's charities.

The two have also been devoted supporters of local causes like the Joseph Brant Hospital Foundation, Woodview Children's Centre and the Burlington Performing Arts Centre, and they have been committed volunteers with a variety of charities. Susan was co-chair of Breast Cancer Support Services' 2012 charity gala. Ralph is vice-chair of the Joseph Brant Hospital Foundation's campaign cabinet. The pair also sits on the foundation's ambassadors council.

On two occasions, they have been honoured with Rotary Club awards for community services. This most recent honour spotlights their inspiring example as well as their tremendous commitment to Burlington. So congratulations to Ralph and Susan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY ACT, 2014

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr26, An Act respecting Saint Paul University.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions. The member from Durham.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the only time of the day that I actually get to speak, which is very depressing, actually.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not whining; however, it's an important observation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just read the petition, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to pay for an otherwise publicly funded service;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices" under the Wynne government.

I am pleased to sign and support this and present it to one of the pages, Urooj, on her last day here.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I enjoy the member from Durham and I would like to start, maybe, a petition to

make sure that we hear from him at least once a day to help him out.

On a more serious note:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Megan who will bring it down the Clerks.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1; 1320

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support it and give the petition to Zohaib.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I'm relieved, and I know that you know that's going to happen, I want to offer to all my colleagues a happy Khalsa Day, Passover and Easter, and wish you all some time with your families and your hard work that you'll be doing back in your ridings. I appreciate all of your work. Thank you.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of the residents of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee"—tax—"on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliary" volunteers "across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee"—tax—"which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee"—tax—"unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations" to voluntarily use "this fundraising tool to invest in more local community projects, including local health care equipment needs."

On behalf of Ontarians, I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Anthony on his last day as a page in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Mantha: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

"The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

"An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips (and is otherwise unreachable);

"The lifelong skills and friendships built during the Ontario Ranger Program help youth develop into mature,

confident, independent individuals, which is well worth the money spent on the program;

"Low-income and high-risk youth sent to rangers are isolated from their home situation and are exposed to the positive team-building environment within the Ontario Ranger Program;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program..."

I support this petition and present it to page Callista to bring it down to the Clerk.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I have a petition addressed as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I've affixed my signature, and I'm happy to present it to page Jonah.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for

establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my signature in support.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Caroline to deliver.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely

exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I concur with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, from all over and many communities across northern Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Nusaybah to bring it down to the Clerks.

1330

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, it seems I still have a voice for my constituents. It reads as follows, as the petition is right here:

"Whereas the government is considering a 10-cents-per-litre increase in the price of gas to fund public transit; and

"Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase in the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families, especially those on fixed incomes and those living in northern and rural communities who have no access to public transit; and

"Whereas the increase in gas tax would cost the average Ontario household" over "\$260 a year; and

"Whereas the government already taxes gas at 14.7 cents per litre, plus the HST taxes," at 13%, "which currently cost approximately 15 cents per litre;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the proposed new 10-cent-per-litre" increase in "gasoline tax and to find better ways to fund public transit through alternatives such as the reduction of wasteful spending" on gas plants and

other waste "and the introduction of an Ontario transportation trust."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Kathryn, one of the pages, on her last day here at Queen's Park.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am proud and pleased to present some of the comments that were just made by the member from Durham representing the people from the northwest.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and give it to page Mustfah to deliver to the table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Last week, private members' public business was interrupted due to the special adjournment of the House. Pursuant to the order of the House on Monday, April 14, 2014, we will resume business today at the same stage of consideration as at the time of adjournment.

During private members' public business last week, Ms. Campbell had moved private members' notice of motion number 70: That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should establish a select committee to review Ontario's winter road maintenance contracts, with a view at improving winter road conditions before the 2015 winter season.

When debate was adjourned on this item of business, Ms. Campbell had completed her opening 12-minute presentation. The time remaining for debate is as follows: Members of the Liberal Party have 12 minutes; members of the Progressive Conservative Party have three minutes

and 48 seconds; and members of the New Democratic Party have 39 seconds.

At the point of adjournment last Thursday, a member of the third party had just spoken, so I will look first to the Liberal caucus for further debate. Further debate?

Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's one of these issues that is very relevant in my riding, particularly this winter when we've seen severe cutbacks in the road maintenance service on the 401 corridor, not just in Northumberland-Quinte West but throughout the province on the 400-series highways.

We've seen a dramatic increase in accidents that have occurred and, surprisingly, we have been very fortunate that the number of fatalities in those accidents that have occurred have been minimal—so we're very lucky that that hasn't happened.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that I had a meeting with the MTO, the Ministry of Transportation, and also the service provider, Carillion in Cobourg, along with the mayors and a few of the administrators of Northumberland county. We heard time and time again that under the new gen-3 contracts that were introduced and that service providers had to bid on, the standards and the bare minimums were cut. What we've seen is the number of plowing vehicles on the 401 corridor in Northumberland-Quinte West drop from 19 down to nine, and also the number of depots. We had four sand and salt depots throughout the riding; now there are only two. This approximate savings of about \$800,000 is insignificant when you think about the cost in loss of revenue for every hour that the 401 corridor is shut down in this province.

So the supposed savings that the Liberals are trying—Premier Wynne is trying to paint herself as the transportation Premier. We've already seen what the former education Premier has done to the state of education in the province of Ontario and, quite honestly—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Yes, Mr. McGuinty.

That's why I'm here—a former high school teacher—because of the policies brought in by former Premier McGuinty.

So this Premier, Premier Wynne, is trying to paint herself as the transportation saviour for the province of Ontario, but neglecting rural Ontario once again—I have to make that point. What we've seen—and I know the Minister of Transportation is going to want to probably speak to this now—is the fact that this government has made severe cuts to the services on our 401 corridor, and this is unacceptable, especially coming from a Premier who is trying to establish herself as the transportation Premier.

On almost a daily basis, we hear Premier Wynne go on about: We have to invest in our roads and bridges—\$29 billion is the latest figure—to make sure those arteries are open so we can get traffic moving and we can get goods to market. But that \$29-billion investment has

a dramatic impact when they're, in fact, cutting services to the 400 series.

My pain goes out to the member from Kenora-Rainy River: Northern Ontario has been blasted, and their services have been cut as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate?

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just wanted to make sure that my friends over there were comfortable.

I'm going to start off with the member from Northumberland-Quinte West. We, on this side of the House, in your judgment, are somehow anti-rural Ontario. Is that correct?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the minister to speak through the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, this is a curiosity that I'm sure Ontarians will enjoy exploring.

We're spending \$10 in rural Ontario for every dollar you spent on infrastructure when you were in government. They were at \$1.9 billion total; we're at \$14 billion. We have just announced that we will be adding \$29 billion on top of that \$14 billion.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham, come to order. The member from Northumberland-Quinte West, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: So I just find this a laughable proposition. What does that say about them when they were paying one tenth of the amount of money invested?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Minister of Transportation please speak to the bill at hand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the minister to speak through the Chair and speak to the bill.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will.

What that meant, Mr. Speaker, was that they were part of 30 years of government that so massively under-invested in highways that we ended up with highway systems that are not safe enough—certainly not what they can be.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West, come to order, for the second time.

1340

Hon. Glen R. Murray: So, Mr. Speaker, the capacity of rural Ontario—the highway system is a really critical underpinning of this. We need to complete twinning highways, and we've committed to border-to-border twinning, all across Ontario, of the entire TransCanada system. That's really important to safety. We have to improve the quality of the 11, the 17 and the 69, and finish the twinning of them. Our government is going to accelerate that. That's one of the elements of safer highways and that's one of the action plans.

But the other thing that's a curiosity is, here we have the second opposition motion during private members' business on transportation. There was the member from Thornhill, who wanted to form a committee to study something. Now the member from Kenora-Rainy River wants to have a committee to study something.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, having sat in this House every day—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West, you're warned.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The irony of this—I'm sorry.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound had a committee, too. I don't want to let him feel left out.

Mr. Bill Walker: But you disregarded that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I didn't actually interrupt them when they spoke. Maybe they could extend me the same courtesy.

What was curious about this is that these are the parties opposite who love to list how many committees we have—and they want to add three more. I've been listening to six months of attacks on the government—that we're studying too much stuff, that we have too many committees—and I, as minister, now have three, not two—thank you for correcting me—more committees that I'm supposed to support. So I'm hoping the member from Kenora-Rainy River can explain what seems to be a somewhat contradictory position, that we as a government have way too many committees yet we should add not two but three more committees to study more stuff.

We agree, obviously, that studying things is a good thing, research is a good thing, evidence-based policy is a good thing, but you can't have it both ways. Whether we have 31 committees, 35 committees or 37 committees—I'm all about committees. I like results—you know, good process—but maybe if you don't want to be criticized for bringing forward private members' bills for committees, on a two-way street you'd be a bit more respectful of the fact that we actually do use the consultative process.

But let's go to what the problem is, Mr. Speaker. The problem is, we just went through a winter where the performance of winter maintenance contracts was not what we think it should be, and I dare say not what the member from Kenora-Rainy River thinks it should be. I'm going to suggest that we both agree with that, that the conditions were unacceptable.

They were particularly bad in the beginning of the winter. Why was that? We've had an evolution of what we now call stage 3 contracts. Why do we have stage 3 contracts? I know my critic in the official opposition will like to listen to this because since 1980, when we started privatizing things, particularly under the previous Conservative government, the ideological focus of it was to outsource it. We used to have something called "managed contracts." These were private sector-delivered services, but MTO managed them. Some said it was the

best of both worlds; some said it was the worst of both worlds, because it was all for-profit, but it cost the public sector a huge amount of money.

There was a statement made by former Premier Michael Harris where he said, "We have restructured government in a way so that you can never reverse what we did." One of the examples that's been used in Steve Paikin's book, I believe, was that when you lay off 3,000 employees at MTO and you don't leave a single truck, it's very hard for the public sector to get back into the snow removal business. I give the opposition party credit. The Conservatives were very good. They so eviscerated public sector winter maintenance that it's very expensive, when you don't own a truck or a stick of furniture, to go back into the business again. They did that intentionally. I think the member for Kenora-Rainy River and I would agree that that was a bad thing, not a good thing.

What happened at that point is that the industry that is now suggesting wrongly—because we have the safest roads in North America, the safest roads in winter, which is incredible when you think we compete with Texas and California and places with higher population and less inclement weather. It's remarkable that we and Ontario's contractors and workers have maintained the safest roads in North America—the safest. This is not an issue of road safety. Our winter roads and our northern roads are the safest in North America, relatively. There are safety issues, but our number of fatalities—and one fatality is one fatality too many, but we do a better job than anywhere else. Is it perfect? No. But is it better than everywhere else? It is.

What's interesting is that they're performance-based contracts. The irony of what I've been hearing from the Ontario Road Builders' Association is a complete contradiction. They lobbied for years to say the following—and I want my friend from Quinte West to listen to this: "We don't want managed maintenance contracts. Stop telling us how many employees to have and how many trucks to have. Stop telling us and prescribing the system. Government, get out of the way." This is what I hear from the Conservatives all the time. "Government should get out of the way and let the private sector do its job and deliver savings." And they did. We're at 25% less costs than we were in 1996. Why? Because politicians or officials at MTO said, "Let's lower the budgets"? No, Mr. Speaker. It's because competitive bidding, for 20 years now, has been lower and lower and lower.

The budget is not set by me or the ministry. It's an open, competitive tendering process, and the lowest bidder that meets the standards wins. Everyone who holds those 22 maintenance contracts got it through an open competitive process where they said, "We could do X for this price."

If you want to put more money into it—now, what do you say to the people who lost, who said, "I could do it, but I could do it for a higher price"? It makes no sense. So MTO, actually, in the last round of contracts was so concerned about this. We met with each contractor and said, "Are you really serious? You can do that?"

I have 32 standards that they have to meet, that they're held accountable to, or they get fines. Every one of these standards is quantifiable. It's a percentage of bare pavement; it's a particular time frame. There is nothing to quibble about. These are not qualitative standards which are up to judgment. You set the standard for snow removal. You set what the grade is, how bare it has to be, how fast, how quickly you have to get there, and the circuit times.

My ministry is holding those contractors to account. Each of them that did not meet the standard of the contract that they signed, at the price they agreed to, is being fined. We have zero tolerance for unsafe roads. We have zero tolerance for contractors who sign a contract, win it over other bidders at a certain price, and don't deliver. My concern is about opening up a whole bunch of pathways for people who are not meeting their contracts. The moment the contractors come to me or our ministry and say, "Minister, Ministry, we can't meet the contracts," we'll open negotiations.

I am not satisfied with the system, so for the last several months, we have been looking at options. We have looked at the option of bringing things in-house. We are aggressively pursuing that very hard right now, because we do not have a single truck or driver in the public sector. So we're looking at a second alternative, and I will be engaging at NOMA with municipal leaders.

I will be starting a consultation with northern members where our problems are, because in most of the province, we are not having problems with snow removal. It is in about four particular area-maintenance contracts that we have the problems. I'm going to suggest that maybe in places like Kenora, Dryden, Thunder Bay and Marathon, we should do what other jurisdictions do, like Minnesota, Virginia or Maine, where they actually fund the municipalities and they give the municipalities extra trucks and vehicles to maintain the highways in the area. It stays in the public sector, but you give more money, more capacity and more vehicles. We're going to talk through FONOM and through NOMA about the possibility of a municipal-provincial partnership, so we would add that.

We added 50 vehicles in the north alone. North of the French River, we added 50 vehicles. I would just as soon put more vehicles and more equipment there. We don't decide on the vehicles. We gave them \$9.5 million and said, "How many more can you buy?" The contractor said 50; there are 50 more vehicles out there.

We're also going to look at particular situations where we can bring it in-house. That's a more challenging situation because of the devastation that was left behind from the previous government.

Managed contracts, we're a little more skittish of, because that means greater public sector expenditure with less control. It means that we have to be a bit of a nanny state, and we don't get much more savings.

I would say that in 80% of the province, this system is working very well. It's delivering safe standards. The majority of our private sector contractors are meeting the same standards of performance, and I don't get com-

plaints in about 80% of the contracts. In 20% of the contracts, I had unending complaints, particularly in the member's riding, where it was completely unsatisfactory.

In those areas where we had the greatest complaints, I am going to take the strongest measures. I believe that in northwestern Ontario, we need a new public-private partnership to deliver that. I'm not sure we need another committee. I appreciate and respect the member's concern. I'm not, as minister, going to stand in the way of the formation of a committee. Whatever that process takes, I think it's more important that we all work together in this House to get those results and change the system.

1350

I'm going to be looking at in-house services and better standards enforcement for the contracts. Since we started doing the fines, even in the areas where we were having the problems we've now seen much better improvement, and the MTO staff reports 100% improvement in those areas with that.

I will work with the honourable member. If it's through a committee, we'll be open to that, but let's get the results people deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Kenora-Rainy River, you have two minutes and 39 seconds.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister of Transportation as well as the members of this House who took the time to weigh in on this very important issue of highway maintenance across Ontario. I'd like to start by addressing some of the comments that were just made by the minister. Specifically, I'd like to start with his comments and skepticism about us needing another committee. It needs to be said. I tried to be nonpartisan when I was talking about this as much as possible, but I can't help but address that issue head-on. The fact is that we wouldn't need to create a committee if this issue had been dealt with by our present government in a timely manner.

The other thing is that I think we do need the committee because the issue is: It extends beyond these contracts. Yes, it includes issues like safety, the fines—the adequacy of the fines. I would argue that the fines are not adequate because they aren't enough to act as a deterrent to have these contractors live up to their contractual obligations. We need to look at possibly some element of bringing this in-house. We need to look at the economic impact, not just for the public sector and for public monies that are being spent, but the impact that that's having on private businesses. We need to look at highway classifications. I think that northerners need to weigh in on this, because they're the ones who are travelling these roads each and every day.

I do agree with the minister that twinning is an essential part of safety; I agree with you on that. But to the same point, the people in the northwest around Kenora have been waiting for years and years and years. We've heard the announcement, the re-announcement and the re-re-announcement of the twinning of the Kenora

highway, and we're not seeing any movement on that file. If you talk to the community of Shoal Lake, you will see a very frustrated and stressed-out community because they're not being consulted. That needs to move ahead.

Also, I don't think that these long-term grandiose plans that we do need to consider should stand in the way of us having adequate highway maintenance right now. We haven't had that twinning up until now; we have had satisfactory highways, so I don't think that should stand in the way.

When it comes to road safety, the minister says that we have the safest roads in Canada, but I would respectfully say that you should talk to the people in Kenora who have to travel to Manitoba for medical appointments and everything else. They will see the line on the highway. They will see perfectly good highways in Manitoba; they will see really subpar, dangerous and slick highways in Ontario.

The other comment that I wanted to—oh, I'm going to run out of time. I wanted to address the Auditor General, but I will raise that later on in another debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

AUDITOR GENERAL
AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act /
Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur
général.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 190, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act. Just to give the explanatory note on it:

"The Auditor General Act is amended to permit the Auditor General to conduct special audits of public contractors. A public contractor includes any body or entity that delivers programs or services on behalf of the crown and that receives payment or financial assistance from the crown or another entity, or is empowered by the crown to collect fees for its services."

I will give some background on why I feel it's important to bring this private member's bill forward. I've had the opportunity and the privilege to be Chair of public accounts since the election in 2011. It took a while for the committees to get formed; I believe it was in early 2012 that they were formed. For the last couple of years, I've had the privilege of being Chair of public accounts. The Auditor General actually sits on the committee, so

you get to see up close and personal the work the Auditor General is doing.

The unusual thing in the past two years has been that typically the public accounts committee will look at the annual report that normally comes out in December of each year, put out by the Auditor General, and will pick sections of that report and spend the year, with the limited time that's available, looking at those sections. The past two years pretty much have been solely devoted to the Ornge ambulance special report. As I say, that has been since 2011. That brought out some interesting concerns.

Also, there have been increasing demands on the auditor to do special reports. Since 2011, outside of the annual reports, there have been special audits completed on Ornge air ambulance, on the Mississauga power plant, on the Oakville power plant and, most recently, on the divestment of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.

What this bill would allow is to follow the dollars into these organizations. With the specific nature of the audits into these organizations, it's becoming more difficult to follow the dollars through organizations that receive public funds. With Ornge air ambulance in particular, the creating of for-profit subsidiary companies through Ornge Global proved to be a stonewall to the special investigation and provincial oversight.

Currently, when conducting audits, third-party service providers and indirect recipients of public funds are an area which the Provincial Auditor does not have access to. Some entities falling into these categories may comply with the results of the audit but could choose to provide only selected information. When this is the case, it is difficult to get a clear picture of where the funds are going. Those are public dollars we're talking about.

One such example is with the recent investigation into the cost of the Mississauga power plant cancellation. The proponent, Greenfield South Power Corp., who was under contract to build the plant, submitted only select financial information for the investigation. The company, as the third party recipient of funds, could not be compelled to comply with such requests from the Auditor General.

The Auditor General is being asked for more specific tasks and more special audits. The public accounts committee recently passed a motion to have the Auditor General examine the winter roads maintenance program, the same topic that was just being discussed in the past private member's bill in the last hour. If the current legislation remains in place unamended, it could pose problems for the auditor and their efforts to obtain key information on private contractors providing road maintenance. I know for a fact that the state of the roads was an issue across northern Ontario, and there is significant support for this review in particular. The contracts to be reviewed, after all, are with third party companies.

I might just note, specifically in the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, that the last two years have been a real challenge. The winters have been more challenging, but

certainly the level of complaints that my office has received about winter maintenance has been significant. So this is important work the auditor will be doing, but the current legislation limits the ability of the auditor to do a thorough job in this investigation.

This limitation stretches to many areas where public bodies contract out service delivery to private or for-profit third party organizations. Specific areas where this information would be useful include details on profit margins, number of employees, and salaries paid to senior management. In fact, as we saw, executive compensation was a key component of Ornge as well, and it was one of the significant red flags in the whole Ornge situation.

Third parties can also include organizations such as charities and non-profit groups. There's no doubt in my mind that this lack of information makes it harder for the auditor to do their job and affects the quality and completeness of the particular audit.

1400

The auditor needs the correct tools to do the job. In this case, the current legislation can be improved to allow the auditor the ability to follow the dollar. Bill 190 would be an amendment to the Auditor General Act that would help to modernize legislation to meet the more complex and changing needs of audit requests. One of the components of the 2013 budget was the creation of a new office of the Legislature in the form of the Financial Accountability Officer. With the creation of this position, as well as the expansion of the Ombudsman's oversight in the province, there is increasing potential for areas of overlapping jurisdiction between offices. Perhaps that's another issue that needs to be addressed, so that we don't have offices doing the same job. In fact, I know that to do with hydro bills right now, the Ombudsman is looking into that, and that's also an area that the Auditor General is looking into.

Regardless of overlapping areas of oversight, as more oversight and transparency in government is surely warranted, it's important that the Auditor General be able to complete their audits and make accurate recommendations to the Legislature. By expanding the scope of audits, governments can be better equipped to improve service delivery of programs funded by taxpayers, including getting better value and results for the money spent. This could, if done correctly, help to restructure practices to deliver better value for tax dollars. In other jurisdictions, similar offices benefit from this investigative power. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia all have strengthened oversight to allow for third-party recipients of public money. There is currently tabled legislation in New Brunswick with this aim as well, to help the auditor uncover unethical practices and determine where public funds are not being well spent.

Reports from committees of the Legislature are even beginning to request that the auditor examine areas that current legislation does not reach to. As an example, in April 2014 Ontario's Standing Committee on Social Policy released a report titled *Diluted Chemotherapy*

Drugs. The report found that 1,202 patients at four hospitals in Ontario and one in New Brunswick who had undergone chemotherapy treatment had received diluted doses of particular drugs, and that the company supplying the drugs was unregulated. The contract to purchase these drugs was between the pharmaceutical company and a group purchasing organization called MedBuy. The hospitals were not a party to the purchasing contract for the product.

Group purchasing organizations are contracted with by various health care organizations, such as individual hospitals and groups of hospitals. The Auditor General does not have the authority to audit these purchasing organizations. The report—that's the report of the Ontario Standing Committee on Social Policy—recommended that group purchasing organizations and shared service organizations be subject to audits by the office of the Auditor General of Ontario to provide oversight, in order to maintain transparency and accountability in procurement practices in the health care sector.

Tarion is another example, I know my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk has a particular interest in that. I believe he's going to speak to this private member's bill and will discuss the implications of that in greater detail this afternoon.

When you take a look at Ornge and the special audits into the Mississauga and Oakville power plants, it is clear that a strengthening of the Auditor General Act is past due. I believe that it is a common-sense solution that will allow the Ontario Auditor General to better do their job, and I would hope that you would join me in supporting Bill 190.

I would say, in my last minute and a half or so, that the Auditor General is an office of the Legislative Assembly that is very much respected, and the work the Auditor General does is looked at as being nonpartisan. In our current system in Ontario and across Canada we don't have that much financial oversight, especially if you compare us to municipalities even, which spend a good deal of their time looking at budgets and going through items line by line; or if you go to the States, the state legislatures seem to spend half their year looking at the finances of their particular state. That's not true in Ontario, particularly when you have a majority government. We do have estimates committee, but they don't really spend that much time actually looking at the finances.

In Ontario, we do have the Office of the Auditor General, and I think it's well worth looking at the annual report done each year. You can always learn something from it. The government of the day can always improve the delivery of services, the cost-effectiveness of services, from the work done by the Auditor General, so it's of great value.

I believe that our past Auditor General, Jim McCarter, who did the job for 10 years, and our new Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, who is doing a great job, have really done a very worthwhile job here in the province of Ontario. That work can be improved with the passage of this bill, so I hope that all members will support Bill 190.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am really happy to have the chance to stand this afternoon and speak on Bill 190, the bill that has been brought forward by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I had the chance, as did all of us here in the Legislature this afternoon, to listen to his opening and introductory remarks regarding this proposed legislation.

I listened closely to what the sponsoring member had to say, and I want to thank him for bringing this forward and also for speaking about this bill, not surprisingly, with a great deal of interest, because he is the sponsoring member, but also speaking in very measured tones about the importance of making sure that as a Legislature, as a government, generally speaking, we do what we can to provide those we have the privilege of representing with the kind of oversight and openness and transparency around the matters that take place in this Legislature.

So I do want to thank him for bringing the bill forward. I think it's important for this kind of legislation to make its way to committee and pass at second reading, and that's why I believe and I hope that it will today.

But I did want to talk a little bit about the fact that over the last 10 years, the Ontario Liberal government has spent a great deal of time taking advantage of every opportunity to provide the kind of transparency and openness regarding a wide variety of issues, particularly as it relates to financial and fiscal issues, and I've said this many times in the Legislature when I've had the chance to speak. Starting right back at the very beginning in 2003-04, in our very first budget, we took very significant steps to make sure that the people of Ontario, at every point in the future heading into an election campaign, would have the opportunity to know very clearly what the state of the province's books was, which is only fair and only proper in terms of that kind of fiscal transparency and openness and accountability.

As you might recall, Speaker, that was done directly in response to what had, unfortunately, taken place prior to the 2003 election campaign, when a previous Conservative government chose to present information to the people of Ontario that did not speak very clearly to the fact that there was actually a \$6-billion hidden deficit. We on this side of the House, and my predecessor, actually, the former member of provincial Parliament from Vaughan, Mr. Sorbara, in his first budget, took very significant and concrete steps to make sure that couldn't happen ever again.

We also took very significant steps with respect to ending the practice of spending tens of millions of dollars on partisan advertising, using the taxpayers as the sponsors for that kind of advertising.

So I think it's important to recognize, again, that over the course of the last 10 years, we have at every turn embraced and moved forward with a number of reforms, a number of initiatives that have actually provided the people of not only my community of Vaughan, but all

107 ridings, the people that we are all here to represent, with a great deal of confidence regarding what takes place here, knowing that what takes place here is done in the most open and transparent way possible.

I can also talk a little bit in the time that I have left about some of the other measures that we laid out in the same area, in the same vein, in budget 2013, in which we did provide a very strong plan to manage responsibility through improved accountability for effective results and value for money.

For example, in budget 2013, as many will recall, we included the requirement on a go-forward basis for the creation of a Financial Accountability Officer that will provide all members of this Legislature, regardless of which caucus they represent, with the kind of research ability and availability to make sure that the information that we have at our fingertips is provided in the most transparent and open way possible. We are now—and this has been said by others in this Legislature.

1410

I am proud, on behalf of the government caucus, to be the representative on the committee that's doing its work with respect to the hiring Ontario's inaugural, as we call them, FAO—financial accountability officer. I sincerely hope that through the hard work of myself, the other two members representing their respective caucuses, the Speaker and others, we can arrive at a place in the shortest time possible from today to be able to announce who the inaugural FAO will be for the province of Ontario. I think it's extremely important to make sure we have that individual in place as soon as possible.

People watching at home, from my community and beyond, will recognize that since she became the Premier of Ontario, Premier Kathleen Wynne has been very determined to make sure that she leads the most open and transparent government in Canada, if not beyond, and she's done a phenomenal job, working alongside the government House leader, who is also the Minister of Government Services, to introduce a series of initiatives regarding making sure that government opens up.

The entire open government initiative, in fact, is something that I know I am very proud to be part of. Part of this general initiative that I referenced a second ago is also the accountability act, which is designed to strengthen political accountability, enhance oversight and also increase transparency. There are a wide variety of measures that will be contained in that particular legislation that will take us that one step further with respect to making sure we provide the kind of oversight and the kind of transparency and openness that the people of all our communities certainly expect and deserve.

As I said at the outset, I was really happy to have the chance to hear the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka in his opening comments. I thank him for bringing this bill forward. I do believe, from my standpoint, that this is something that should carry forward with the support of the Legislature today, to be reviewed and analyzed at committee—I believe that's where it belongs—and I look forward to having the chance to hear some of the other dialogue and debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to commend my colleague Mr. Miller for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. As a member of the public accounts committee, I want to compliment Mr. Miller on his leadership as Chair of the public accounts committee over the last two years, as we have investigated Ornge in response to the Auditor General.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend both the former Auditor General as well as our current Auditor General, for the work they do in helping us, as opposition members, hold the government accountable.

I want to make this very clear: I do not believe that the legislation that's being brought forward, which essentially simply allows the Auditor General to do the work that is expected of an Auditor General, and to ensure that the Auditor General has access to the information necessary to complete that task—this is not a partisan issue. This is not about the opposition versus the government, and there should be no defensive posturing on the part of the government related to this. In fact, what should happen is that rather than seeing this bill go through the typical private member's bill process, it should really be adopted by the government and implemented immediately. Lord knows, we have serious transparency and accountability issues facing the government of the day.

I just want to put forward for the record, so that people who are watching this debate understand, precisely what this act will do. I will quote from the act: "Despite any other Act, the Auditor General is entitled to have free access to all books, accounts, financial records, electronic data processing records, reports, files and all other papers, things or property belonging to or used by a ministry, agency of the Crown, Crown controlled corporation, grant recipient or public contractor, as the case may be, that the Auditor General believes to be necessary to perform his or her duties under this Act." That is the essence of this legislation.

Anyone observing this debate would have to question why that isn't already part of the auditor's authority. Let me read from the Auditor General's report on Ornge—I think it just highlights the need for this legislation. Here's what the Auditor General said about his attempts to get to the bottom of what was happening at Ornge. Multi-millions of dollars of public funds that should have been focused on delivering an essential health care service in the province of Ontario were squandered, diverted and mismanaged. The Auditor General was attempting to do his job: to audit. But here's what the Auditor General said, and I quote from his report:

"We were given access to only those documents relating to entities that were controlled by Ornge or of which Ornge was the beneficiary. We were refused access to the records of any of the other entities. Ornge's management and the board advised us that this was because the ministry was not funding the other entities directly or indirectly (under the Auditor General Act, we are generally allowed access only to organizations funded by the government)."

Here's the problem: The current act actually did not give the Auditor General access to those other corporations, and yet they were key to the waste and the squandering of public funds intended for our air ambulance service.

Again, from the Auditor General's report: "[T]he scope of our work generally excluded any observations that we might have made had we obtained full access to these records."

I believe the reason that this is so critical is that there is such a doubt in the mind of the average person in this province about the integrity of government itself. It's no question that we have this kind of cynicism towards government and politics and politicians, because what is missing is a very fundamental principle in government, and that is the principle of transparency and accountability. It doesn't matter which agency; it doesn't matter what ministry; it is all taxpayers' money. It is our position that regardless of how far down the line and through how many corporate veils the dollar that originates with the taxpayer may flow, the Auditor General should have the right to follow the money, to find out where it has gone and what it is used for, and to ensure that there is integrity in the public services that are being delivered. That is the essence of my colleague's bill.

I'm pleased to support it. It is that straightforward. I trust that all members of the House will bring this to a positive vote. As I said, let the government take this on as its own bill. I'm sure my colleague will not be insulted by that. It will be in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to second reading of Bill 190, the Auditor General Amendment Act, introduced by the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. It is indeed an honour to once again stand in this House and to bring the voice of my constituents in Windsor—Tecumseh to this Legislature; I take great pleasure in doing so.

I can attest to the fact that New Democrats are focused on putting people first and respecting the public purse. Our track record, I believe, speaks for itself on that matter. We know that the public entrusts us—all of us, as members of provincial Parliament, all 107 of us—with the honour and the privilege to serve on their behalf. That comes with the expectation that we, here in this House, are always looking to find opportunities and measures that would expand the accountability and transparency of government spending. We know, at least on this side of the House after seeing the Liberal circus of scandals in recent years, that it's something that's desperately needed.

I know that I haven't been here all that long, but after seeing this government operate first-hand, it's no wonder why there is legitimate skepticism about how money is spent in this province.

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I know the people in Ontario not only want but deserve to know that their hard-earned tax dollars are not

being wasted. That is why New Democrats have already brought forward some important accountability measures, and I know that we will continue to push for more.

I believe this bill, Bill 190, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act, will provide that overworked expression: "another tool in the tool box," so to speak.

It will enable the Auditor General's office to conduct special audits of public contractors. Currently, hundreds of corporations, boards, associations, consultants and other firms that receive millions of dollars of hard-earned tax dollars face no independent oversight. I was told that these contractors can be audited by the respective ministry, but the government doesn't need to release that information to the public. This bill would change that.

This bill, if enacted, would mean that all those contractors would be subject to an audit by an independent officer of the Legislature, that independent officer, of course, being the Auditor General. But, Speaker, most importantly, the findings would be made public in the annual report of the Auditor General.

In short, this bill would allow us, the 107 members of the Legislature, those elected by the electorate, to have some oversight over spending on public contractors through our independent officer rather than just leaving that responsibility to the executive branch.

This bill would also require that public contractors be bound to provide information to the Auditor General as needed to conduct a special audit. That means contractors could not refuse to provide the right information at the right time for the right purpose. It would provide the Auditor General free access to review all papers, all property of public contractors, if the Auditor General's office believed such access was necessary to perform its duties. I don't see why you would need to hide anything, especially when you have the privilege of receiving government dollars.

Back to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and his proposed legislation, I will be supporting this bill on second reading and its referral to committee. However, I think it's a bill that could be looked at more closely, double-checked and improved. We must make sure that loopholes for contractors to avoid being audited by the Auditor General are found, if they exist, and corrected, and that further debate and the right amendments are made to strengthen this bill.

Speaker, I'm just editing as we go here to make sure that others have as much time to speak as they need.

I trust the government members who are in this House this afternoon are listening and do appreciate the intent of the proposed bill and can find it within themselves to agree it's not a bad idea, and should they feel the need to improve it, accept it now and pass it along to the committee stage for further refinement.

I commend the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, a member whom I personally hold in high regard, for bringing forth this level-headed suggestion for improving the way we spend and account for the taxpayers' money in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate, and I do thank the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka for bringing forward this bill. I understand that its movement to the House was accelerated for some reasons that I think we would all support.

I think you can view this bill through a number of lenses, but certainly I, like a lot of people in this House, got my start in politics at the local level of government. I think if you've served on a council or if you've served on a school board or if you've served on any one of those levels of government that are closer to the people, that are closer to the community, and that have, in my humble opinion, a much more interactive relationship with their constituents, transparency is the order of the day. Transparency is something that is just part of the process. When you do your budgeting, you do it in public. When you do your consultations on the budgets, it's done in public. When you're doing the formation of the budget, you often go out to members of the community or to various stakeholders and ask for advice as to what should be in the budget and how that money should be spent once a tax rate is set. That becomes ingrained within you. I spent 18 years in that environment, and I'm quite comfortable with discussing the finances of whatever organization that I hold elected office to govern with the people in my constituency. I often interact with people in my own constituency office talking about various investments that are made, and talking about it in a very open way.

Now, I think we can go through the history of the country and probably any country, certainly in the western world, and find examples of where that hasn't always been the case. I think what the member is doing here is he's trying to put another arrow in the quiver, perhaps, of an arsenal of ever-improving budgetary methods of allowing for the process to become more transparent, for allowing the people who elect their representatives at any one of the levels of government to understand how their tax dollars are being spent, and to ensure that they're being spent in a wise manner.

Right now, I think what we have is a Premier who certainly has made the case that as the leader of this province—as Premier—she is a person who wants to be open, who wants to be transparent, and she wants to improve accountability in this place, and to make that a priority for our government. And budget 2013, I think, laid a strong plan to manage responsibility through improved accountability for the effective results that we all want, and value for money.

Interruption.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I believe there's a cell-phone around me somewhere, Speaker. I can tell you it's not mine. But there is one dinging somewhere. I'm casting a look at this black bag here.

Anyway, what we did in recent years is we went out to a very respected economist in the province of Ontario, to Don Drummond, and we asked him for some advice on

how we could strengthen the accountability in the province of Ontario. Mr. Drummond, I think, comes with a pedigree as one who does not shy away from being frank, from being forthright and from being very, very blunt in his advice. When he brings forward advice, he expects it to be followed, and he's quite clear about that as well. So I think with the advice that we've received from Don Drummond in this regard, we've been able to move forward in strengthening the accountability we have to the people of the province of Ontario in the expenditure of their dollars in a number of ways.

But most particularly, I think, I can point out five or six areas where there are clear examples where that has happened already. I think if you look now at the post-secondary educational system in the province of Ontario, you'll see that discussions around the funding of those institutions now, and how that money is spent, are much more open. It generates a lot more debate, and that is something that we think is a good thing.

We introduced innovative new legislation, with the support of other parties in the House—and I think often with the ideas from some of the other parties in the House—to bring in what's called a Financial Accountability Officer, that's going to be an independent officer of this Legislature, that's going to provide the analysis that we really need. I think Ontarians—and I think all three parties should share in this—should take some pride that we're the first province in all of Canada to introduce this officer, to have this officer in the House. It's going to better inform members; it's going to provide that improved oversight that we need on fiscal performance. Other places around the world have this in place, but we'll be the first in Canada. If you look at the UK, you look at Australia and you look at Sweden, they've had very, very positive experiences with people who have been introduced to this type of a way of dealing with financial accountability and openness.

We've instituted, also, a wide-ranging Open Government Initiative to modernize government in the province of Ontario, to improve accessibility and accountability.

Often people think that we should have a hard cap on senior executive compensation—we've done that.

We're improving the public release of the members' and the ministers' expense reporting, and that is something that I think people have asked for, for a long time.

I will support the members' bill. I think he's done a good job—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

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Mr. Toby Barrett: Certainly, accountability and transparency are becoming an increasingly important topic of conversation, not only in this Legislature but also in the media. MPPs are increasingly calling on the Auditor General to conduct special assignments and audit organizations to uncover the inefficiencies we're hearing about, unethical practices, and situations where public dollars are not being well spent.

But as we've just heard, there are certain situations in which the Auditor General does not have the authority to audit—for example, indirect recipients of public money, or third-party service providers funded by government-sanctioned fees, such as, by way of example, the Taron Warranty Corp.

I have also been a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for several years now. I support Bill 190. I feel it would help our Auditor General do a more comprehensive job. We think of the example of Ornge air ambulance, with the number of private companies. There's a list there as long as your arm.

Just to go back to Taron and the home building industry, there are good builders in Ontario—certainly, down in Haldimand-Norfolk—but we do have the occasional marginal, the poor builder. Concerns have been expressed by a number of opposition MPPs—Rob Milligan, Frank Klees, Randy Hillier, Todd Smith, Ted Chudleigh and myself—concern over consumer protection.

MPP Ted Chudleigh voiced his concerns with respect to Taron's failure to come to a resolution with 14 homeowners with respect to HVAC—heating, ventilation and air conditioning—design and construction issues.

MPP Frank Klees's office received many complaints regarding Taron. He handed me an extensive file on Dr. Earl Shuman. It's known as the Shuman Test fraud. It's a 16-year-old battle, maybe going on 17 years now, between Dr. Shuman and Taron. Rob Milligan has also been working on that particular case.

Motion 50 was put forward by MPP Randy Hillier to conduct a value-for-money audit of Taron, again with respect to consumer protection.

MPP Todd Smith has petitions circulating, calling for the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit as well.

I, as opposition critic for consumer services, introduced a formal order paper question last December. I asked the ministry when it will conduct a value-for-money audit on Taron Warranty Corp. to enhance, again, transparency, accountability and governance of the corporation.

I received my response a week or so ago: "If the Legislature determines that the Auditor General should be asked to provide a third party value-for-money audit of Taron, I will respect the will of the Legislature and welcome the recommendations that audit report may contain." So the minister has thrown the ball back in our court, Speaker, and it's incumbent on us to keep that in mind when it comes time to vote.

Many MPPs have been contacted by CPBH, Canadians for Properly Built Homes. They have been on the Taron file for quite a while now. They have a number of concerns. They recognize that the organization is 38 years old. They feel there is a need for updates. They're concerned about continued refusal to provide complete and easily accessible information to the public about builders' performance records. They have concerns around governance, and the licensing of some of these

marginal builders that I mentioned. They're concerned about the quality of housing, in some cases, in the province of Ontario, and the lack of technical standards around HVACs, for example.

I've received a number of emails recently through this organization. From April 4, 2014: "The fact that money had to be paid for repairs is the very information that a prospective homebuyer would be looking for to assess a builder's performance, and that is not accurately represented in our case."

On April 5, I received an email. The question was posed: "Is your builder performance information on the Tarion site now accurate?" The answer: "No, it is not accurate, and below is a copy of our builder's record. Tarion has pursued our builder in court to recover over \$42,000 paid out on our home yet they will not post this amount."

So, Speaker, whether it's condominiums or houses or townhouses, we as MPPs do receive requests from consumers with respect to Tarion. We have to ensure and help enhance the reputation of the building industry. It's time to shine some light on the Tarion home warranty corporation, and, again, all to the good with respect to transparency and accountability—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak on behalf of the people of Kenora–Rainy River and weigh in on this bill, Bill 190.

Bill 190 will enable the Auditor General to conduct special audits of public contractors and to report on any findings of impropriety that the Auditor General's annual report would show. Currently, the Auditor General Act does not permit the auditor to perform a special audit of a public contractor. A public contractor, of course, includes any body or entity that delivers programs or services on behalf of the crown and that receives payment or financial assistance from the crown, or is empowered to collect fees for its services.

It's important to note that New Democrats are focused on putting people first and respecting the value of Ontarians' money, and we support measures to expand accountability in government spending. That's why we pushed to establish the Financial Accountability Office in the last budget. The Financial Accountability Officer will provide independent analyses of the state of the province's finances, including the budget and economic trends, as well as examining other matters by request of MPPs or committees.

It's also why a colleague of mine, Gilles Bisson, was able to bring forward his private member's bill, Bill 134, which is the Broader Public Sector Advertising Act, which will allow the Auditor General to review advertising by agencies such as Hydro One, OPG and other government agencies, corporations and publicly funded organizations, and that covers organizations such as Metrolinx, Pan Am and Ornge.

This bill would also provide oversight by way of the Auditor General to thousands of boards, associations, consultants and other firms that receive hundreds of

thousands of dollars of public money but face no independent oversight.

The Auditor General does outstanding work, and it's also important to note that her reports command a lot of respect and that when she issues a report, MPPs and the government take notice. But that said, the scope of her review will be limited to examining value for public money. In the case of reviewing private winter highway maintenance contracts, as was referenced in his remarks by the member who brought this bill forward, this review that is conducted by the Auditor General will not be completed fast enough, because the fact is that we do need to examine winter highway maintenance now by establishing a select committee that can undertake this work immediately and issue recommendations that can be implemented in advance of the next winter season, but this report will also lack the scope to address some of the root issues of poor highway maintenance. It won't be able to look at the aspects of safety, fines that are in the contract, say public versus privatization, the economic impact in the region or highway classifications.

We need to expand the review to include the human impact, namely that of safety, that we're experiencing as a result of poor highway conditions, and also the economic impacts, as I mentioned, of poor highway maintenance on our regional economy, such as the impact that it has on the bottom line of private businesses.

In Kenora–Rainy River, a local general freight carrier came to my office to discuss with me the economic impact that his company is having as a result of poor highway maintenance, and I wanted to read into the record some of the comments he addressed to me in a letter.

He writes, "I believe the highways in northwestern Ontario have been left in unsafe and virtually impassable conditions on many occasions this winter. We have customers in Sioux Lookout, Hudson, Dryden, Red Lake, and soon to be again, Ear Falls which require our trucks to travel on Highways 11, 71, 17, 10, 502 and 72....

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"With the conditions of these highways, namely 502, if we wanted to go to Hudson and pick up a load with a US destination, we would have to travel 150 miles further than we normally do to complete the haul. It is not difficult to understand that 150 miles at \$3 a mile is \$450 that we lose every time we have to go to Sioux Lookout, Dryden, Ear Falls or Red Lake. The reason we incur this extra cost is due to the fact that our professional drivers refuse to travel on Highway 502, as they feel it is unsafe to do so. It is my responsibility, with Labour Canada and the WSIB, to ensure a safe environment for my employees to work in....

"We have had three accidents this year which were attributed to the poor road conditions. The loss we have incurred due to these conditions is astronomical, in the amount of over \$75,000."

As important as his concerns are, they won't be considered by relying exclusively on the Auditor General's report on highway maintenance, and my point is that this bill, which extends the Auditor General's oversight, is an

important step in addressing key issues like inadequate highway maintenance, but it isn't the complete answer and we still need to conduct an immediate review of these contracts by experts and the public alike, in advance of next winter.

In summary, I think this is a good act. I think it's a step in the right direction. Nobody in my caucus will argue with the fact that we need to have more oversight, and we need to have more accountability of the dollars that are being spent, not just in the wake of the recent scandals that we've seen by this Liberal government, but we need to have mechanisms in place to have this oversight no matter which government is in power. For that reason, I will be supporting this bill, but I encourage members to also note that we have some other important issues that are facing the province and facing the north and that this isn't the be-all and end-all, and we need to continue on with the select committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all the speakers who commented on the bill: the member from Vaughan; the member from Newmarket–Aurora, who talked a lot about Ornge, which he's been so involved with, and how at Ornge I think he said the work of the Auditor General was hindered by the current legislation and that if this bill was passed, it would allow the auditor to follow the dollars. In the case of Ornge, all the money was public money, but part of it was being sent into these companies that were created, and the auditor couldn't follow that money. With this legislation, the auditor would be able to follow the dollars.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh was supportive of the bill, and I thank the Minister of Labour as well, who talked about his experience at the local level of municipal politics for 18 years and how you do spend a lot more time looking at the finances in a closer view. I think what he was saying is that that doesn't happen as much here at the provincial level.

I also note the member from Haldimand–Norfolk talked a lot about the Taron Warranty Corp. I note that since Taron is not designated as a crown agency, the Auditor General currently does not have the authority to audit Taron. If this bill passes, the auditor would have the authority to audit Taron.

I also thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River for her support, and I do think it would be of benefit if this bill passed in terms of the auditor's work looking into winter road maintenance contracts, and it would include items such as safety and the specific contracts.

Lastly, I would just say that we already have places like BC, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, and three jurisdictions in Australia that allow this, and I think it would allow our fine Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk to do her work better if this bill passes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

ONTARIO BIKE MONTH ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE MOIS DE LA BICYCLETTE EN ONTARIO

Mr. Delaney moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Ontario Bike Month / Projet de loi 182, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois de la bicyclette en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. One is of course cognizant of the fact that this is the final private member's bill before the House rises for Easter. Members may not be surprised if I choose not to take the entire 12 minutes.

I guess one of the first things I'd like to do is say a personal hello back home to my lovely spouse, Andrea Seepersaud. It was in fact a bike ride that was really our first date together, so good afternoon to Andrea.

You know, so many of us have simply grown up with our bicycles. When I was first asked by my caucus colleagues and other friends, would I sponsor this bill to proclaim June as Ontario Bike Month, I thought to myself, "You mean there isn't an Ontario Bike Month?" Sure enough, this will be the act that proclaims June as Ontario Bike Month.

Now, one should be cognizant of the fact that this really isn't that loaded a bill. The entire operative part of this bill, Bill 182, says that it proclaims June of every year as Ontario Bike Month. That's it. It isn't so much what the bill says as how it empowers people to do something with the bill.

So if you're a group of cyclists, this is something that's going to say to you, "You know something? Somebody just proclaimed June as Ontario Bike Month. Why don't we get together and have an event? Why don't we organize a ride? Why don't we do something for charity? Why don't we get some of our kids involved? Why don't we hope it doesn't rain that day?"

This is something that is going to stimulate the imagination of so many people in Ontario for whom a bicycle is really an extension of their legs. I was one of those as I grew up, and it's one of the things that brought me some of the greatest joy in life.

To give you a couple of statistics, there are about 600,000 Ontarians who are daily cyclists. Presumably, these people have not been cycling in the dead of this icy cold winter. I am assuming that Ontarians, being a very level-headed, healthy lot, will recognize that there are some days when it's really better to leave the bike in the garage and take transit or even, heaven forbid, drive to work. But I think the safety part of it is very important.

About one in 20 Ontarians report riding their bike on a more or less daily basis, and that's a number that's actually up. We may look at some of the ads we see and the news reports, and wonder whether or not we're becoming more or less sedentary, particularly as we have

an aging population. But at least we're getting better at this, relative to cycling. Roughly one in 25 of us used our bikes a generation ago. Today it's roughly one in 20.

In fact, on a weekly or a monthly basis, nearly one in three Ontarians says, "Yeah, I bike either weekly or monthly," and that number is also up from just two years ago. About two out of three Canadians—a number up from around 53% in 2011—would actually prefer to bike more often. That's encouraging.

Most Ontarians believe that we do need more bike lanes or paved shoulders, with more than three quarters of us in support of better cycling infrastructure. So, presuming the passage of this bill by the Legislature, we'll have the month of June annually in which we, as cyclists, can talk to our cities, talk to the feds, talk to our province, to our MPs, MPPs and city councillors and say, "Let's make it a little bit better for all of us who ride bikes. Let's make it a little bit safer for all of us who ride bikes." If we can make it better and safer, then more of us will ride bikes. That's exactly the virtuous circle that we're here to promote.

Three quarters of people in Ontario agree that cycling gets people out of their cars. If you get people out of their cars, clearly you have fewer cars on the road. You've got better transit choices. If more people are riding transit, then there will be more transit. Indeed, we find that at the three GO train stations serving western Mississauga—Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville—there are bike racks at all of them. So if you ride your bike to the GO train station, not only can you lock up your bike at the GO train station, but you can also bring your bike with you on the GO train or on the GO bus. If you need to do so, you can cycle your way to where you take the GO train or GO bus and when you get off the GO train or the GO bus, you can get back on the bike and you can finish your trip to your destination.

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Nearly all of us are in support of government funding toward local active travel efforts, including the development of school travel plans for schools across the province. Who never rode their bike to school? I rode my bike to school fairly often. I remember riding on a weekly basis back and forth when I lived in Montreal, from our home in the city of Pierrefonds to Concordia University, and that was about an hour and a quarter ride. It didn't rain on me too often, but it was a nice ride first thing in the morning, and it got me to school before transit could get me to school. I was able to stay at my grandmother's house during the week, so I could just haul along in my backpack everything I needed for the week, ride in and I would have my bike there to commute to and from school, which was only about an eight- or 10-minute ride. On Friday afternoon, I'd hop back on the bike and ride home again. It kept me in good shape. It was a good way to get in shape for hockey, because as they say, you don't play hockey to get in shape, you have to get in shape to play hockey. About three quarters of us agree that bike share programs not merely alleviate gridlock but play a vital role in our transportation systems.

So those are just some good reasons why having an annual Bike Month is going to be good for Ontario, is going to be good for the people in Ontario and is going to spur some really interesting and imaginative things from cycle clubs and from youth groups who say, "Let's get some people together." There's a lot we can do with this. There's a lot that we can do for cycling, and there's a lot that cycling can do for each and every one of us as Ontarians, to help us get in shape, to help us stay in shape and to help us ease the traffic on roads and build a better Ontario together by celebrating Bike Month every year during the month of June. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to talk about Bill 182, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Ontario Bike Month. Certainly, I will be supporting the bill. I think it's important to do what we can to promote cycling in the province of Ontario, and that has many benefits, particularly health benefits. You know, a lot of us are not active enough, and by creating more safe places to cycle, that provides an opportunity for people to have more active lifestyles and be healthier. In fact, 69% of Ontarians have said they would like to cycle more, up from 53% in 2011. That's a 16% increase over two years, but we do need to do more to encourage individuals to exercise and take up active transportation.

Physical inactivity alone is directly associated with \$1.6 billion in annual health care costs in Canada, or 1.5% of all Canadian health care costs. So I think anything we can do to promote activity is a good thing, and if making June Bike Month encourages more people to look for an opportunity to cycle, perhaps they'd want to do some cycling tourism. If they were going to do that, I'd certainly highly recommend they go to Parry Sound–Muskoka to take advantage of cycling in the beautiful area around the lakes around Parry Sound–Muskoka. I, of course, have had a private member's bill that has passed second reading a couple of times to do with paved shoulders, the idea behind that being to create more safe places to cycle and to get the benefits that derive from that, namely the health benefits I've just spoken of, safety for cyclists—and for car and truck vehicles as well. Certainly, reduced maintenance costs for the roads—and, of course, tourism benefits. So if you're coming to Parry Sound–Muskoka or the couple of places I've been on cycling tourism holidays—which was Prince Edward county for a couple of days' stay, where my wife and I took bicycles and kayaks along. We kayaked in the morning and cycled in the afternoon. You do look for places that are safe. In particular, that's usually places that will have paved shoulders to make an opportunity to, in that case, ride around to various vineyards and see all the new vineyards in Prince Edward county or in Niagara—that's the other place I've managed to go on a cycling trip, and there happened to be vineyards there as well, and some pretty good cycling infrastructure and places to ride.

I certainly encourage people to get out and cycle more, and hopefully spring will arrive soon so we'll have an

opportunity to do that in the month of June and enjoy getting outside and getting more activity. I know that most of us sitting around this Legislature could stand to get some more exercise.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville is a goalie for the Legiskaters, so I agree with what he says: "You don't play hockey to get in shape; you get in shape to play hockey." That's what he said. "You don't play hockey to get in shape."

I look forward to his bill passing second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to commend my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville for bringing in this bill—a pretty obvious one, as he says himself. Of course, we're going to support it.

I also want to say, before I get into anything else, happy Easter weekend to all my colleagues.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes. Happy Passover, of course, for those of our Jewish friends. Really celebrate with your family this weekend. It's been a pleasure and an honour to serve with all of you. So I just wanted to get that out there.

I have this image of myself as I get older, and it's amazing how being old gets kind of older every year.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Exactly.

Say that you can't drive anymore—not that you need to drive or even want to drive, but there are these wonderful Danish bikes—I think they're called *niholas*—that are cargo bikes. I remember reading an interview with the designer that said that he designed the bike so they would carry a case of 24 or a small child. You've got to love the Danes—both very good things to carry, I would warrant.

In my case, of course, the kids are grown up. I don't have any grandchildren yet. I pray for that blessed day. But we have a dog, and I like the image of myself driving around in one of those *niholas* with my dog in the front, and actually riding to Queen's Park with that. So at any age, at any stage, biking is a good thing.

On that, I just want to also commend the Minister of Transportation on the Ontario bike plan. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence and I were on a panel at Share the Road the other day—and I want to acknowledge that Eleanor McMahon is here from Share the Road—a wonderful day. We spoke there about the joys of cycling, and how we really want to see this rolling out.

I pointed out, on that panel, that way back in 1992 was the first cycling program under the NDP government. It has taken more than 20 years to get another one going, so we really hope that not just the government but all parties in the House are really committed to seeing an Ontario bike strategy roll out and become a fact, because we're really behind.

Quebec has done a much better job at this; I think we can all acknowledge that. Montreal is far ahead of

Toronto in this regard. We have catch-up to do; we really need to catch up.

I want to thank them for incorporating, of course, my one-metre-passing rule that was introduced in 2010 and is now part of the bill—again, catch-up.

I also want to mention the mandatory side guards on trucks that then-MP Olivia Chow, now mayoral candidate, has called for on the federal level. There's a lot we can do; there's a lot we need to do, legislatively, to make cycling safer, because the one reason most Ontarians do not cycle is safety. The one reason that most Ontarians don't dust off their bikes, get on them and go from point A to point B is because they're frightened—and with good reason.

1500

I want to send out our Girls Government this year. Folk here know—and many have also run Girls Government programs in their own ridings—that I run a Girls Government program. This year the girls themselves came up with this and picked cycling safety, and they did so for a reason. They did so for a very particular, personal reason. Some of them were from Swansea Public School where they lost a teacher, Tom Samson. It was tragic. A grade 2 teacher was killed on his cycle. He's not alone; there are many deaths on cycles, as we know.

Again, while that continues, people will be afraid to get on their bikes and actually go somewhere, because it is scary. Let's face it; it is scary. Both of my children cycle. They're downtowners, downtown Torontonians, and they cycle as their major mode, their only mode, of transportation, 90% of the time. They are young adults, and I fear for them. I fear for them. Both of them have had accidents. Both of them have been doored—we all know what dooring is. This new bill brings in a higher fine for that. Again, this is the reason people are scared to get on their bikes. Perhaps naming a month is a good thing; it heightens awareness. It will really bring home to all of our legislators—city, federal, provincial—that we really need to do more to keep cycling safe.

What does that look like? What does it look like to have a safe cycling city? I've been lucky enough to go to Sweden with my husband. Anybody who has gone to Scandinavian countries will see it—of course, social democrat here, unabashedly—absolutely designated lanes, not just painted on the road, but actually cut off from traffic. What does that mean for cyclists? It means people actually feel safe to cycle everywhere. And what is the result of that? Hundreds more folks cycle every day. This is what we should all be about. It's not just about cycling—and this was raised, really, at the Share the Road conference. It's about the environment. It's about exercise. It's about childhood obesity rates. It's about so much more than just cycling. All of these things are helped. All of these various portfolios are helped if we just get people on bikes.

I went to a ward 7 council meeting in my riding the other night, and there was a wonderful program that was highlighted, that's happening in one of our schools now, where they train kids on how to maintain bikes, on how

to actually build bikes—really; they learn what the mechanics are that go into building bikes—and on how to ride bikes safely. It's a course offered in school. Wow. Imagine. We spend \$800 million every year on busing kids to school. That's \$800 million more than we spend on teaching kids how to cycle to school and making it safe for kids to cycle to school. Also, these kids are learning a trade. They're learning a trade. What a brilliant program. They were presenting this to elementary school principals and parents who are active—a wonderful idea. I would love to see that move throughout the school system—and CultureLink was there too, which is running a great program in Toronto where they actually raise money to give bikes to kids. This is also a wonderful program because many kids in the inner city and other cities do not bike because they can't afford to buy one.

We need to put bikes in the hands of children. We need to encourage them and we need to make it safe for them to get from their home to school and back. It used to be the way. It used to be more of the way than it is now. Now you see, every morning at an elementary school, tons of cars driving up, a total traffic jam as parents drop their children off. Again, I come back to the safety issue. I don't begrudge parents doing that, because I know that their major concern is the safety of their children. We have to make it safe for children to bike to school. That's an extension of this program as well.

Certainly, we endorse recommendations in the Ontario coroner's report, which says to "guide the redevelopment of existing communities and the creation of new communities throughout Ontario" and "creation of cycling networks" and "designation of community safety zones," and the whole idea of "complete streets," which we really need to incorporate. The idea we should all have of the downtown core of any city is an almost car-free zone. It is a zone where people can walk and can cycle, and it's safe to do so. Delivery vans are there. Working vehicles are there.

Again, this is not a pipe dream. This is not utopia. Go to Europe. Look at most European downtowns and you'll see exactly what I'm describing, lived out. Again, we're behind on this file. We need to catch up.

Yes, absolutely, we support the initiative to make June Bike Month and commend the work there. Also, the Minister of Transportation wasn't in the room when I said it, so thank you for incorporating my one-metre rule—three-foot rule in the States—into this bill.

Again, to the Girls Government this year at Swansea and James Cullan: Thank you so much for raising cycle safety. It was a wonderful discussion we had here at Queen's Park, when they came to Queen's Park. It's great to see kids take this on. They took it on for a reason and again, I'm going to mention his name: Tom Samson. I'm going to mention Olivia Chow's initiative on mandatory side guards. We need that. That's federal.

We need to act, folks. Yes, it's one thing to mention a month, and that's a good thing, but we really need to act, and act quickly. We can't wait four years to have the one-metre rule put into place. We can't wait for another

death to make cycling safety a priority in our communities. We really can't wait, for environmental reasons, as I've said, and for childhood obesity reasons, to put cycling safety and cycling priority into the educational envelope. Again, \$800 million on school buses, and how much on cycling safety or cycling to school? We can't have that kind of differential. We really need to do this.

As I say, as I started out, I still hold to that image of getting rid of the cars, having my nihola, my dog in the front—or a case of 24, as the designer said—cycling to Queen's Park and back safely, which I cannot do right now. I could not do that right now, cycle in to Queen's Park and back safely. Wouldn't it be great to look out in the parking lot of Queen's Park and see more bicycles than cars? Wouldn't that be great? That's what we're all aiming for here. That's not going to happen until safety is not only required but absolutely guaranteed for every cyclist.

Again, does it take money? Absolutely, it does, but actually, it's an investment because it saves money. You've got to think like economists and not like book-keepers here. You put money in; you get more money out. You put money into a cycling program; you save a whole lot more down the road. You save it on medical costs; you save it on environmental costs. Put the money in; get the money out.

Again, do we support the member from Mississauga—Streetsville in this? Absolutely, we do. We just want to see much more, much faster, much sooner.

Here's to cycling. Here's to the nihola and the inventor of cargo bikes. Here's to a downtown that's safe and environmentally friendly. Here's to schools where kids can cycle back and forth. Here's to all of that. Here's to the future. Let's have that future sooner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to say that it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 182 from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, and also the other members who spoke, who had their own private members' bills. The member from Muskoka had the bill about paved shoulders, and the member from Parkdale—High Park had her bill about the one-metre rule, which is very important too. So they are dedicated to making a shift here.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, coming from a municipality of Scarborough, which has the largest national park in Canada right in the city—you've got one right at your back door, the Rouge national park. You could spend a whole day cycling in Scarborough and never see a human being. So if you want to cycle, go to the Rouge national park. It's an amazing place—and Scarborough in itself, along the waterfront too.

Anyway, this bill is really a bill that gives an opportunity to promote cycling. It's not for all the reasons, which are valid, that have been mentioned about safety—which is critical, more awareness about safety; the health aspects. But I want to talk a bit about the economics of cycling.

Not enough of us realize that there is an incredible economic mini-boom happening in cycling. I have one of

the world's leading bike manufacturers in the world in my riding, so I know it full well. It's called Cervélo. Cervélo will sell bikes to the whole world, which is an amazing change. Because of the competitive labour rates, we have bikes that are imported from Taiwan and everywhere else, and it's difficult to compete. On the other hand, when we produce quality products like Cervélo does, some of their products—Mr. Speaker, hold your hat—can sell for about \$25,000. People buy these bikes for \$25,000 because they are space-age quality products. That's right here. It's a \$30-million-plus company—one little company. There are others, but most of the economics of cycling go to the retail end and the service end.

1510

There are over 500 bicycle retail outlets in southern Ontario that we've counted—500 outlets. That's people working—paycheques—selling, fixing bikes and parts—500. They are all over the place.

I was going up Christie Street the other day; it was one of those sunny days we had. There was a young man on the corner, right by Fiesta Farms there. He had a sign up that said, "I'll give you a spring tune-up for your bike." So people were lined up down Christie as this young man—very industrious—was tuning up bikes.

This type of thing is happening in back alleys, on streets like Harbord, St. Clair, Bathurst, all over the city of Toronto, and I'm sure all over Windsor and Kitchener, where people are starting their own businesses, small businesses—entrepreneurial people who are all over the place who are either repairing bikes, selling bikes and selling bike accessories. You go to Mountain Equipment Co-op and half the place is full of bike accessories. So people are in the economy of the bicycle big time.

The other big part of the economy of cycling is in economic tourism impacts; it's about a \$400-million-a-year industry. So if you want to attract tourists to Prince Edward county or you want to attract tourists in the Niagara Peninsula, or you want to attract them to Mississauga, or you want to attract them to York region or—

Mr. Rob Leone: Cambridge.

Mr. Mike Colle:—Cambridge—a beautiful place to cycle. You have to acknowledge there are people with money who will come to your place if it's safe and available for their bicycles.

They even have a program with Via that you can go on the GO train, you can take your bike on the GO train and go to Niagara, get off, and cycle Niagara—a beautiful place in Ontario to cycle.

All over Ontario, they're getting it. In Ottawa, there's a great place for cycling up the canal. I've got pamphlets here from the Niagara region, from Bruce county, from Northumberland and Ottawa.

But part of the problem is that you have to make it inviting. You have to welcome the cyclists because the cyclists will come. They will eat. They will stay in a bed and breakfast. They will drink the wine, eat the food and eat the cheese, the local cheese from those parts of Ontario. It promotes local tourism big time. It's also a

very important way of promoting this great province. They do it in Quebec. They do it all over Europe. You can go on bicycle tours in Holland and Denmark.

There's big money in cycling. It's not just a namby-pamby thing: "I'm going to get a bike and it's great." Yes, but it's big business, Mr. Speaker.

Scarborough could have a business explosion. Invite cycling industries to come into Scarborough. "Cycle the Rouge." I don't see any signs there that say, "Come to the Rouge and cycle; bed and breakfast; stop and eat; have something to eat; have a glass of wine; get on your bicycle." This is what we should be doing.

There are business opportunities in cycling. They're huge, and that's why I recommend that this bill will help promote the business aspects of cycling. Really, it's the safety, it's the health aspects, but it's also the business of cycling. It's a very important new area of investment that we can make.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: They are telling me time is out, but I just want to thank Howard Brown and Eleanor McMahon for their advocacy through Share the Road.

I want to thank the Minister of Transportation for pushing safety with cycling, with the fines for dooring. We can finally, maybe, cycle on paved shoulders. One day we'll have a big glass of wine with my friend from Muskoka when that happens. When the dooring fines come in, we'll have another glass of wine, so we'll be cycling and drinking wine all through Ontario and having a great time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 182, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Ontario Bike Month. I'll be supporting this bill, Speaker, but I'll also say that Bill 182 was a reminder of this government's belated and limited commitment to active transportation.

According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of people cycling to work province-wide—what the wonks refer to as modal share—has been stagnant since 2001. Specific markets have racked up even less impressive results. My riding of Burlington is one of them as part of the Hamilton census metropolitan area, or CMA.

StatsCanada data showed that the share of people cycling to work in the Hamilton CMA dropped by 22% between 2006 and 2011. It is now 0.7%, lower than it was in 1996 and around half the provincial average, Speaker.

Why is this? One reason is perceived risk. In November, the CBC reported that Hamilton roads were among the most dangerous in the province. The injury rate for Hamilton cyclists is up to 81% higher than the provincial average, Speaker. Yet despite that reality, Hamilton has been named a silver medal Bicycle Friendly Community. Burlington only rated a bronze.

Clearly, award plaques and photo-ops do not protect cyclists or promote cycling. If this province is serious about increasing the rate of cycling, cities should be

encouraged to follow best practices, such as designing streets with continuous bike routes, which is a proven way to increase the rate and safety of cycling. This gets people out of cars where possible, which makes traffic flow more efficient and makes the best use of our streets.

Yet this Liberal government has historically been incapable of making substantial changes that would actually promote increased daily cycling. Remember that the cycling strategy this bill aims to support was only slightly more substantial than the bill not so long ago. Bill 182 is three pages long. The government's draft cycling strategy was just four pages of a 17-page document released quietly in a Friday news dump six weeks after the House was prorogued—not a very bold commitment.

There are many benefits to cycling: better health, reduced urban traffic congestion, and even opening up economic development opportunities. A study from the New York Department of Transportation released last year linked protected bike lanes to an increase in retail sales. Similar results were found five years ago in the Annex here in Toronto.

None of us spends our day using only one way of getting around. The same person may rise early for a jog, take transit to work, take a walk on their lunch hour, drive their kids to a recital, and bike with friends on evenings or weekends. The province needs to do more to support each of these options and, in doing so, deepen the health and vitality of communities. Doing so will give people the comfort and confidence to cycle daily, not just on sidewalks, not just on trails and not just on weekends. But without clear goals, well-defined priorities, secure funding and the will to act, even a 20-year plan will end up delivering more of the same old, same old.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm delighted to rise and support Bill 182, brought in by my colleague the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Certainly, as a former medical officer of health, the benefits of cycling are extremely obvious to me. First of all, there are those health benefits, obviously: reducing the risk of things like obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. All those are obvious. It's a way of promoting a healthy lifestyle and getting some exercise in what, I think, we would all agree is an extremely pleasurable way.

The only problem, as our colleague from Parkdale–High Park has pointed out, is the safety issue. I also have a daughter who cycles everywhere in Toronto. Of course, she always wears her helmet. This is a good opportunity to remind everyone that, even if not required for adults, it's a very sensible thing to do in case you run into a situation.

Your daughter, the member from Parkdale–High Park, experienced a dooring situation. My daughter was hit by a taxi. She went right over the hood of the taxi. Luckily, she was not hurt, but it obviously was a very frightening situation.

We are balancing the health benefits with safety issues.

1520

I'm very pleased to say that the regional municipality of York, where my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham is situated, has really taken a leadership role. I think a lot of people think of York region as the land of the car. We are trying earnestly—the lower tier municipalities and the regional level have been working very hard on ensuring that people have the opportunity to cycle safely. In fact, the region of York has already declared June as Bike Month.

A number of celebrations are happening in York region. The York Region District School Board is promoting Bike to School Day on June 12. Also, we have Bike to Work Day, which is being held and celebrated in both Toronto and York region on May 26 to, again, promote.

All these little pieces, of course, are promotional, marketing and encouraging kinds of initiatives. What we need is the type of infrastructure investment that my good friend the Minister of Transportation announced earlier this week. I think this is a tremendous step forward: the type of funding announcement but, more importantly, the requirement that any and all new roadwork projects in Ontario include a cycling infrastructure component—very, very important.

The city of Markham, a number of years ago did, in fact, through all three levels of government, commit to developing an eight-foot-wide cycling path all around the city of Markham, not only for recreational use. The idea was to ensure that people had ready access to this particular pathway so that they could cycle to the local shopping plaza, the school. They looked very, very carefully at retail opportunities, so if you needed a bag of milk, you could simply hop on your bike and go very easily to the neighbourhood convenience store or whatever.

It's this kind of initiative that is incredibly important. In fact, for those of you thinking of some cycling over the next weekend, with some time off, just so you know, York region has over 1,000 kilometres of cycling facilities, including bike lanes, trails—

Mr. Mike Colle: That's great. Let's hear it for York region.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: —I'm glad to hear the enthusiasm—boulevard paths, paved shoulders—very important; the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has put that in front of us again today—and many signed bike-friendly routes, so a great number of initiatives going on.

I was really pleased to see that we have the Share the Road Cycling Coalition represented here with us today—Eleanor McMahon—such a wonderful enthusiast for this particular initiative, bringing so many different organizations together; the Ontario Medical Association, the Office of the Chief Coroner and provincial-municipal partners. In fact, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, Dr. Scott Wooder, taking the types of initiatives that are going forward in this province, made the

following comment, "Ontario's doctors are encouraged by these new commitments, and by the amendments to the Highway Traffic Act as laid out in Bill 173." We hope everyone is going to ensure we get that through fast. "We hope to see these funding and legislative initiatives move forward in the coming months. Making Ontario's roads safer for all road users—whether they are on foot, in a car or on a bicycle—should be a priority for everyone."

So let's pass Bill 182 today, one important step forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have a few moments to speak on Bill 182, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Ontario Bike Month. I want to commend the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. I know the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka mentioned his abilities as a goaltender for the Legiskaters hockey team. I appreciate his advocacy for this bill.

I have also said numerous times on the floor that we really should change the way we do proclamation bills like this. I'm a former municipal councillor, a former mayor, and I know that proclamations are dealt with very easily at municipal council chamber, as you do, Speaker, as a former municipal official. I just find that we have bills that we have unanimous consent for that we pass here, and they languish in committee. I really would hope that at some point we would develop a framework where perhaps members could sign their approval for proclamation at the table, and when we get so many votes, we could maybe bring it back for a vote so we could actually get some of these proclamations that pass second reading to get passed at third reading and become law in the province of Ontario.

I have a number of folks who are passionate advocates for cycling. I think this is a great idea by the member, to have a month that is designated by proclamation to celebrate the good things that happen when people cycle in Ontario.

The Chair of Cabinet was here earlier, the member for Kingston and the Islands, and we share an organization, the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, as does the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. They've done a great thing in my riding by resurfacing the bike path along the Thousand Islands Parkway. They've done it in conjunction with the federal government, with the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, and it really has transformed that Thousand Islands Parkway back to where it was when Bell Canada first created that bike path so many years ago.

I do want to take a few moments and honour Alan Medcalf, who is a tireless advocate for cycling in my riding. At the Ontario Bike Summit this week, the Share the Road Coalition gave Alan the Wheels of Change Advocacy Award. Now, Alan hasn't been a long-time resident of Brockville, but I have to tell you, his presence on the cycling scene has really transformed our community and our county. He has been involved in so many

different organizations. I have a bit of his resumé here. He is chair of the Brockville Cycling Advisory Committee, a committee member of the school travel planning committee, a member for Brockville tourism, and a director for Tour du Canada and the Ontario Trails Council. He is a current member of the Brock trail committee. He's a member of the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Healthy Communities Partnership. He's on the Ontario Welcome Cyclists advisory committee, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere trails council, and he's a volunteer cycling consultant for the waterfront trail.

I had the pleasure of seeing him and Doug George, another member of the Brockville Cycling Advisory Committee. They were here this week for the summit. Actually, Alan managed to coerce Brockville mayor David Henderson to come to see first-hand what the bike summit was all about.

I know there are a number of members, like the member for Durham and myself and the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, who have been past speakers at the summit. A number of us were on all-party panels, really talking about the good things that are being done and the good things that can be done in this province to be able to promote cycling. I'm just so very pleased that Alan Medcalf was given this award. He's a very worthy recipient. He really makes a difference and does it in a very positive way. I think that's the one thing about Alan that I've been so impressed with. He has been so constructive. He has been able to build so many bridges in Leeds and Grenville and in Brockville to improve our cycling infrastructure. I can't think of a more deserving member of our community to be honoured by the Share the Road Coalition at this year's Ontario Bike Summit, the sixth Ontario Bike Summit.

I also couldn't talk about cycling without giving a shout-out to my executive assistant in the riding, Michael Jiggins. This guy is a really great cyclist. He'll jump on his bike in Brockville and cycle down to Gananoque. I get tired just thinking about it, but he's a great resource to me in my riding about cycling issues. I know he works very closely with the committee as well.

I felt it important not just to recognize Michael but also to give a shout-out to Alan Medcalf and thank him for his work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am delighted to hear the comments of my colleagues, and I thank them very much for their unique insights, not merely into the subject of the bill but into the areas which they call home. Many of them are truly lovely areas that are very conducive to riding.

To my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka, again a wonderful place to ride a bike—the hockey players, of course, I've noticed, naturally stand up to one another, and one of the reasons they're so nice is because you've always got to be nice to your goaltender. So let's just say this about the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka: He's

very modest about his ability, but he is a natural goal scorer and a good two-way player.

Now, my colleague from Parkdale–High Park represents a riding that I lived in from the mid- to late 1970s. I used to explore Toronto from my base: my apartment on Oakmount Road. While she waxed eloquent about biking in Montreal, it is very clear that the member has never actually ridden a bicycle through Montreal traffic. As a Montrealer, born and raised, I would suggest she temper her comments unless and until she's ridden in Montreal traffic.

I thank my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. I remember exploring that neighbourhood in the 1970s with my bike, and in fact a lot of the shortcuts I learned in 1977-78 still help me today in some midtown traffic.

My colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham made a number of excellent points. Of course, this is an area whose rapid growth offers an excellent opportunity to set a good example and to plan biking better with some 21st-century infrastructure.

And, of course, to my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, I've got to acknowledge this member's willingness and ability to backcheck. It's very important. He represents a lovely area, and a very, very pretty part of Ontario to see from the seat of a bicycle.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Ms. Campbell.

Ms. Campbell has moved private member's notice of motion number 70.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

AUDITOR GENERAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 190, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j) the bill is being referred to—Mr. Miller?

Mr. Norm Miller: To the regulations and private bills committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has requested that it be referred to regulations and private bills. All in favour? Agreed? Carried.

ONTARIO BIKE MONTH ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE MOIS DE LA BICYCLETTE EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Delaney has moved second reading of Bill 182, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Ontario Bike Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): No—oh, my mistake, sorry. Mr. Delaney, you would like the bill referred to?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Tempted as I am, Speaker, to suggest justice policy, I will instead ask that it be sent to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Delaney has requested that the bill go to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Given that June is just next month, can I move unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 182?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm sorry to advise you that that's not allowed during private members' bills.

Orders of the day? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a happy Easter and move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until Monday, April 28 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1534.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
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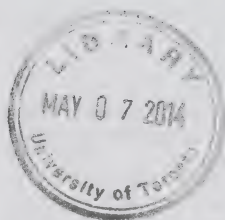
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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 28 April 2014

Lundi 28 avril 2014



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Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 avril 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm thrilled to introduce to the House today some wonderful people from my riding: Heather Pham, Josh Pham, Tyler Pham and Jordan Pham. They're joined by Rebecca Stein, Heather's sister. We also have the president of OPPA, Jim Christie, and Patrick Armstrong from the Dave Mounsey Memorial Fund.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce Chief Tom Bressette of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. Ipperwash is located within his First Nation.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I've got a few guests here today from the Canadian Council of Independent Laboratories. I've got president Jeff Pike, executive director Derwyn Reuber, and board members Al Nathoo, Michael Maher and Stephen Walker. Please welcome them to the Legislature today, and don't forget the reception this afternoon.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just have two brief announcements. I would like to welcome my friend from Elmira, Ontario: Ann Kendall, who is the mother of my legislative assistant, Shannon Zimmerman. I'd also like to just recognize for the House today that my friend from Windsor—Tecumseh is a grandfather to Katana. His daughter just had a girl. I want to congratulate them.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome two fine gentlemen from the region of Waterloo: Michael Brattman from Erb and Erb, and Doug Heaman from Advocate Insurance—two insurance brokers today.

As well, Ann, welcome also from Elmira.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I rise to introduce Mr. Chris Floyd, who is president, and Mr. Randy Carroll, the CEO, of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, who are here today along with brokers' delegates from right across Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to have a gait and mobility consultant specialist in the House watching the proceedings. I hope that he's going to have a good time, Speaker: Rennie Terbogt.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome to the gallery today several people from the Northumberland Child Development Centre. We have Clare Paterson, Lisa

Kirbie, Wayne and Robert Smith, among others up here. I want to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I have a big group from my riding today. First of all, I'd like to introduce Mary Wright and Benjamin and Murray Schwartzentruber, who are with us for the day.

Also, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 10 years, my wife, Sara Pendergast, and my eight-year-old son, John, are here today to watch the festivities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Oshawa we have, to represent page Ashley Bowes, her mother, Katherine Bowes, here.

On behalf of the Minister of Rural Affairs: Page captain Kaia Douglas's mother, Yvonne Leicht; father, Cameron Douglas; brother Jake Douglas; grandmother Janet Douglas; and grandmother Betty Leicht. Welcome to Queen's Park.

For the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Page captain Thomas Brassard—his mother, Chris Brassard, and father, Mark Brassard, are here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We welcome all our guests. Thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, every morning when I wake up I ask myself a question: What can we do to create more jobs—more opportunities with better take-home pay for Ontarians, those who are out of work and those who are struggling to get by on a part-time job? On this side of the House, we believe that the first step towards providing a more prosperous province of Ontario with better jobs is to balance the books, to spend within our means, not to put more debt on the back of the next generation.

We're concerned that you're going in the opposite direction, that you have the belief on that side of the House that you're going to try to spend your way out of deficit.

I have a document here, which my colleague Mr. Fedeli from Nipissing found called Fiscal Plan Information. It appears to be a cabinet briefing from February 13, 2013, which indicates that the Liberal plan to balance the budget, according to finance officials, is a sham. Was the minister briefed on this document?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Before I respond to the question, I do want to extend my condolences to the family of Herb Gray. For four decades, Herb Gray dedicated his life to public service. He served as a minister under three Prime Ministers, a Deputy Prime Minister himself. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, and I think all members of this House, we extend our condolences to the family of Herb Gray.

Speaker, to the question: This is a clear division between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. The Conservative Party thinks that they can cut their way to prosperity. On this side, we believe in investing in people. We believe in investing in infrastructure.

We've seen this before. Let's just remind ourselves how many jobs were lost the last time they had the opportunity to do that. It's not just how—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course, we echo condolences to the family of Herb Gray, a great Canadian, a great public official.

We also extend our condolences to the family of Kimm Fletcher, who, sadly, Speaker, passed away. My colleague Mr. Chudleigh and my health critic, Christine Elliott, were fighting hard for Ms. Fletcher.

I'm going to pass on, through one of the pages, if I could, the document, Minister, that you would have been briefed on. Again, it's confidential advice to cabinet from February 13th. I refer you to page 9. Page 9 in this document indicates that you had no plan to balance the budget. The numbers are no more than a fiction.

Page 9 also will tell you that the finance officials—this is not us, not Mr. Fedeli, although he would tell you the same thing—indicated it was going to take, potentially, another six years to balance the budget.

1040

Could the minister confirm that is actually your plan: another six years to balance our budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the Leader of the Opposition is sincere when he says he wakes up every morning wondering how he can create more jobs, he's demonstrating that in a pretty bizarre way, because his promise is that he wants to fire 10,000 education workers—gone; fire 2,000 health care workers—gone. He wants to cancel full-day kindergarten. He wants to end the 30% tuition grant. He doesn't want to move forward with the investments we're making for children or people with developmental disabilities. He wants to cancel job-creating partnerships—for example, OpenText: 1,200 jobs.

The Leader of the Opposition's jobs plan is to kill jobs. Our jobs plan is to invest in jobs. We are on track to balance, but we will not do that at the expense of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I think I've been absolutely clear each and every day. I've got a plan to create a million good jobs in the province of Ontario—good, solid, middle-class jobs. If the minister wants to know more about my plan, I'm glad to send a copy across the way. Again, Speaker, I think I've been very clear.

The concern I have is that the minister has been briefed. The Premier and the finance minister had these documents over a year ago. He buried them. Mr. Fedeli, the member for Nipissing, has done a good job at uncovering them. This is serious advice from finance officials who have said that you have no plan to balance. In fact, we're risking another six years. These are finance officials who brief you, the Premier and the finance minister.

I worry that when you're using these types of fiscal sleights of hand, these card tricks that undermine confidence in our province, people are watching: job creators, investors.

Minister, if you have no plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario, but put us further in debt, isn't it time to change the team that leads this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: People won't need a great memory to remember that the last time they had the chance, they actually hid the deficit from the people of this province: \$5.6 billion. That deficit was hidden from the people of this province.

We are going to deliver a budget on Thursday. It will be a budget that invests in people, invests in prosperity and invests in infrastructure. The party opposite last time filled in a hole for the Eglinton Crosstown subway. I just hope they're not planning to halt production at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, it is telling when the Deputy Premier won't even come close to answering a very direct question. She won't acknowledge if she was briefed on this document, as the Premier and the finance minister were. I suspect you were. It is a confidence-in-cabinet document that we've now made public.

I'd refer the Deputy Premier to page 5 of the document that she read at least last year, if not more recently. Page 5, also from finance officials, indicates that the economy has still not yet regained the strength of pre-2008. There are fewer jobs relative to population and more unemployed in our province, and per capita output of the economy remains below the pre-recession level.

When I hear the Premier and the finance minister, they say the opposite. Quite frankly, based on this track record—the gas plants scandal—I believe the finance officials. I think they're on the money here. The problem is, you're ignoring them.

Do you agree or disagree with Ministry of Finance officials that we're still behind where we were as recently as 2008?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are on target to balance. What I can tell you is that we have implemented—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough. *Interjection.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister. Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're moving forward with 80% of Don Drummond's recommendations. We're the first government since 1996 to actually reduce spending. We've got the leanest government in the country, with the lowest program spending per capita.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, there is a stark difference between their plan and our plan. For them, the holy grail is to balance the books as quickly as possible, no matter the cost to the people of this province.

We are committed to investing in people. We are committed to making those investments that will create a prosperous economy for all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll point out a very stark difference. The minister uses that term. Minister, as you know, every province and the federal government will be in balance before the province of Ontario. Six of those provinces and the federal government are already there. Talk about a stark difference. We all were hit by the same international circumstances in 2008, but everybody else is back on track.

Another stark difference: We will balance the budget to pave the way for job creation and put people back to work in the province of Ontario. You're going to spend us into bankruptcy.

Let me make this point. Again, these are finance officials who are pointing out that your job numbers are not even above where we were six years ago—six years ago, going backwards—so tell me who's right and who's wrong. The finance minister and the Premier say one thing; the finance officials say the opposite. My money is on the objective advice of senior civil servants.

Why aren't you putting the facts on the table? Why won't you admit they're right, you're wrong, and it's time for new leadership?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that the people in this province understand what's at stake. The Leader of the Opposition has made it very clear that his only priority is to get to deficit—I can only assume that means he will halt the infrastructure projects that are moving forward, including Cambridge Memorial Hospital. I can only assume that means he will not sup-

port increased support for families caring for people with developmental disabilities.

We are moving forward with a plan that creates a bright future for the people of this province. We are not going to accept the slash-and-burn, get-to-balance, right-to-work-for-less attitude of that party. It's not the right way forward. We will continue to do what we know needs to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, it's true: I have a plan to put a million people back to work in the province of Ontario, with less debt, affordable hydro and lower taxes. The plan is going to work, and I'm ready to put that before taxpayers to decide if they want to stay on the current path or forge boldly forward to a more prosperous province.

Let me make one last point on the document that you were briefed upon. I think what's important in the document—confidential advice to cabinet—Fiscal Plan Information, was that it ties the lack of job creation with the fact that you're increasing debt in the province of Ontario, and it's an important economic lesson that the Liberal Party seems to miss.

We just fundamentally believe that if you spend within your means, just like families do every day, you send a signal of confidence that Ontario is a place to be. And make no mistake, we are bound and determined to put less debt on the back of the next generation—and more jobs—on the path to prosperity. That is a clear difference. We understand that. We say let's get on with it. Why won't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, with respect, the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have a plan. What he has is a sound bite, and anyone who has looked at the plan very quickly discovers it is no plan at all. It is a sound bite and only a sound bite.

Let me repeat the jobs that he has already committed to cutting: 10,000 education workers, 2,000 health care workers—and ending the 30%-off tuition grant. He's not supporting families with developmental disabilities. I'm just curious about whether cancelling the expansion of Joe Brant hospital is in your plan as well.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister. Thank you for acknowledging the birth of my granddaughter Katana.

The minister has said that as soon as he found out that the girders on the Herb Gray Parkway were faulty, he acted immediately. Does the minister still stand by that statement?

1050

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting that the gentleman opposite put out a statement, but he left one page out of all the documents he released. He neglected to share with the media this one note: "Although the note reflects that the minister's office staff were present in meetings, it should be noted that discussions at those meetings focused on project milestones and evolving issues related to the project agreement. There was not sufficient information during the time periods referenced in the note to make definitive recommendations to the minister or his staff regarding the safety and durability of the girders. Further, the minister's office staff were briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013, and the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013," for the first time.

That's the piece of paper you kind of forgot.

The other reason is, I actually heard about this outside of government in the month previous, and when I researched it, I addressed this with my deputy minister in the first week of June, which is when she organized the review and discovered the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: According to documents released through a freedom-of-information request, both the Office of the Premier and the office of the minister knew the girders were not up to code and posed a threat to safety before they were installed.

The minister's office learned about the substandard girders in December 2012. High-level, biweekly meetings were held afterwards to discuss them. The meetings included senior staff within the minister's office, and as early as April the executive director of policy in the Premier's office was sent the minutes of these meetings.

Is the minister saying that senior staff in his own office, the same senior staff when Minister Chiarelli held the file, did not tell him about public safety concerns on the largest infrastructure project in Ontario's history, which he's responsible for?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm saying even more than that. Not only is that wrong, it was my office that first heard of the problem from people outside of government. When I went to my deputy minister in the first week of June, she told me she was unaware of the problem, as was the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure. It never actually landed. As a result of my inquiries, a briefing was held for my staff on the 14th.

I'll even go further for the honourable member. If you actually go through the paperwork, you will find that the public administration was divided about whether there was a safety issue until late August, when I ordered independent destructive testing and it was revealed that one of the girders was faulty. That was the last week of August, Mr. Speaker.

There's your paper trail. If you want to tell the whole paper trail, then I think, just for integrity reasons, you would release all the information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Again to the minister: We know that senior advisers from the minister's office were in meetings that discussed the problem girders and that senior advisers in the Premier's office were being sent minutes of the biweekly girder meetings as early as April and possibly even earlier.

Does the minister expect the people of this province to believe that senior advisers or the Premier's senior advisers didn't alert him to a potential scandal surrounding faulty girders being installed on this project?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have respect for the member opposite, and I think the truth matters, Mr. Speaker. The note, which I have here and will gladly send over to him, clearly and explicitly says that any discussions prior to June 14th were not about safety issues. They were about commercial applications of the project and had nothing to do with safety issues, and the member knows that.

The member also knows that it wasn't until the last week of August that there was even a consensus amongst public officials that there in fact was a safety problem, and it wasn't until I ordered independent testing in late July that resulted in the girders being destroyed that we actually discovered that.

My question is: Where was the opposition? I was doing your job. The member from Windsor West raised this issue before, and it sounds like the member for Tecumseh is trying to play catch-up.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got it.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. Somebody's got to do the job of the government.

Speaker, in a July 21, 2013, confidential memo to the Premier on the girder issue, it states: "There has been some chatter about this situation in Windsor construction circles and we understand that the Windsor Star may be coming out with a story on this matter this week. It may break during the Premier's visit to Windsor on July 22."

Minister, why did this government fail to take action for months on public safety and allow the faulty girders to be installed, and only act when a scandal was about to break that could put five Liberal seats at risk in impending by-elections?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm going to try this again, really slowly, Mr. Speaker.

The paper trail is very clear, as are the discussions. There were active conversations about this project and any other. To be very clear, there was no discussion—not a word, iota of discussion—of safety issues or briefings until June 19 with politicians, because I was the first one.

The reason those discussions happened is because I heard rumours in May that there may be a problem. I did

not hear those rumours inside government. I heard it from meeting with stakeholder groups who asked me to investigate. The first week of June, I went to my deputy ministers, both of them, and asked them if they knew anything. They both said clearly that they were not aware of any particular safety concerns. Both of them undertook a review and, two weeks later, I was briefed that the things I had heard may have merit.

Finally, we had an independent review which tried to decide whether or not those safety issues were consequential, and that was very public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We know from internal correspondence that this government didn't act on public safety concerns for seven months after it knew girders on the Herb Gray Parkway were faulty. This government only acted after political staff found out that the Windsor Star was asking questions about girder safety and the Premier might be confronted with a question on her scheduled visit to Windsor.

Had the Windsor Star not been investigating these girders, would these unsafe girders continue to be quietly installed to this very day?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, both of us come from a municipal background, and in a municipal background you do not attribute motive. As a matter of fact, you're thrown out of the council chamber for attributing motive. I'll just say I had almost no weekends away with my family through this period of time because I was working on this through the entire summer.

As late as August, senior officials were not convinced that there were safety concerns, including the engineering—it was only when we did the destructive testing. But, Mr. Speaker, the member has the note from the officials that he did not release that tells the public that what you're saying is so inaccurate, it bears no resemblance to the actual events.

If you want to read this document where the officials say, prior to June, there was no—zero—not a word of discussion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier, when she was Minister of Transportation, awarded the project agreement for the Windsor-Essex parkway through alternate financing procurement, a fancy name for privatizing public projects.

According to internal documents, this government prioritized the Premier's contract with a private consortium over the ability for MTO to enforce public safety rules. Why did this government set up a project agreement that threatened public safety?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is, first, patently inaccurate. I don't want to use unparliamentary language, but there's another word that's floating around in my head, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is, there were absolutely no concerns around safety through that particular period of time. The first person to raise a safety issue at the ministerial level was myself, based on concerns that were given.

I will not read into the record again the bureaucrat's note, the official's note on this.

Mr. Speaker, the member has been given a full and honest answer. I've always respected him as a person with integrity.

1100

I would like to point out that all of the documentation shows that the first safety discussion with me was on June 19, and I took more than strong action and more than immediately.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. This week, the gas plant committee, in the justice committee, has the opportunity to sit on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. We have requested that the former government House leader and the former transition chair to Premier Wynne testify. Monique Smith, however, is unwilling to do that, and we are experiencing very much difficulty trying to have her come into the committee.

Let me be very clear. The former government House leader would have known about Peter Faist's contract with the Liberal caucus bureau, and Peter Wallace said and testified under oath that Monique Smith, as the transition team chair, would have known about the gas plant emails and passwords.

So given that she is a crucial piece of the gas plant puzzle, will you compel Monique Smith to testify? You've got her appointed to a government job; bring her back to Ontario and have her—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge will come to order.

Before we proceed, it's always helpful to address your questions to the Speaker.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is wrong. Ms. Smith was asked to appear in front of the committee. She has agreed to appear in front of the committee. She has given several dates to the Clerk, and I am advised, in fact, that she's able to attend. The week of May 5 or May 12 have been two timelines that she has been given. I think members would appreciate that Ms. Smith is actual-

ly located in Washington, D.C., and has to make travel arrangements.

I would remind the honourable member that we asked the Leader of the Opposition to appear in front of the committee. It went on for week after week after week after week, and he's in the same building. And when it comes to the Conservative candidates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is not being helpful. The member from Leeds–Grenville is not helpful. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is not helpful. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex is not helpful.

Mr. Michael Harris: I didn't say anything.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You just did. Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: When it comes to the Conservative candidates, the same ones who said “Elect us and we'll get rid of the gas plant”—we're still waiting on them. In fact, we've asked one of them over 16 times to appear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to remind the government House leader that it is his party under an OPP investigation, not mine. It was their former House leader and their former transition team chair who were responsible for dealing with the gas plant scandal during a certain period of time, not the leader of the official opposition.

It is his party that sent Monique Smith to Washington during the OPP investigation and the search-and-seizure warrant, where she is outside the Speaker's jurisdiction for a Speaker's warrant.

I ask him again—we are sitting this week. Monique Smith is key and pivotal to getting the answers that the committee needs in order to complete its work. Will you compel her on her government job to come back to Ontario this week and appear before the committee on Thursday morning? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member is wrong.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will just be the end of it. You asked the question; listen to the answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is not helpful. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is wrong. She stood up and said that Ms. Smith will not appear in front of the committee. She will appear in front of the committee. She is travelling related to her job—a very important job—and she has given a series of dates over

the next several weeks, in fact, when she will appear in front of the committee.

Where she is also wrong is when she notes Peter Wallace and his testimony. In fact, what Mr. Wallace said is that he did not brief the transition team on this matter.

So two strikes, Mr. Speaker, and I think she's out.

Again, we are looking for the PC candidates to come forward. We are looking for them to explain their policy analysis and their costing.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Despite the minister's office knowing the safety risks, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure allowed faulty girders to be installed and construction to proceed for months, and only took action to halt construction on July 21, 2013.

My question is this: What prompted the minister to take action in July?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What prompted me to take action was—when I became minister, which was only a couple of months before that, I invited all of the stakeholders into my office. I started meeting with all of the construction parties in Windsor, London and Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, you always hear people raising concerns. All the people who didn't get the contracts complain about the people who did, so you have to take a lot of what you hear with a grain of salt. But what I did start hearing was repeated concerns about the process and the installation of girders. When I validated that that was, in fact, a concern that had some legitimacy and was different than the background noise one hears about in the construction industry, I called in the CEOs of four different construction companies and asked them for their advice.

Based on the advice of different individuals, I went to my deputy ministers in the first week of June. Both deputy ministers said they had not heard of any safety concerns nor had staff raised them with them. Based on that, I asked them to investigate. That's what happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, the minister's office knew by December 2012 that girders to be installed were not up to safety standards. During a February 14, 2013, meeting in the minister's office, girders were on the agenda, and the minister's office staff confirmed that they would not be intervening or speaking to the issue directly. The minister says he didn't find out about the girder safety issue until May 2013.

Is the minister saying that senior staff in his own office, who knew about girder safety concerns for months, never spoke to him about it at all?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am saying much more than that. I'm saying they did not know about it. The Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Minister of Transportation both did not know about it. As a matter of fact, after I raised this issue with my officials in June, I

had dissenting views in the ministries, where people felt—still, as late as August—that there were no safety concerns.

It was not until the destructive testing which I ordered, quite frankly and quite assertively, in late August that they were convinced. You've heard their testimony. If you look at all the paper, you'll know that.

Both you and I, the member opposite, have worked in universities. We know the importance of searching for the truth and getting accurate information, and not, I hope, when we get into politics, losing the rigour of that review and evaluation.

I am quite happy to provide you with any documentation, but I will tell you there was not even consensus that there was a safety problem until the last week of August.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Minister, in the coming months, from May to October, communities will open the doors of some of Ontario's most intriguing and charming heritage sites, as part of a great program called Doors Open Ontario. This provides all Ontarians with a chance to visit many of the heritage sites and heritage homes in our province.

There are many sites in my hometown of Ottawa to visit, especially the Billings Estate National Historic Site in my riding of Ottawa South.

Doors Open Ontario is a great initiative of the Ontario Heritage Trust, as it's important to remember our past to appreciate the present.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell us more about Doors Open Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for asking the question. He is a passionate protector of our heritage, and I want to thank him for that.

Speaker, in 2002, the Ontario Heritage Trust launched Doors Open Ontario, the first province-wide event of its kind in our country.

1110

In the last 12 years, great success: Over five million visits have been made to heritage sites participating in this exciting initiative. It has grown to over 55 events in 170 communities, with over 1,200 sites and 500,000 annual visits as of last year—and it will keep growing.

Residents and visitors are invited to discover firsthand our province's hidden heritage treasures, some of which have never been open to the public. Best of all, admission is free.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

The Ontario Heritage Trust's efforts to organize and support such a wonderful program for all Ontarians to participate in is commendable. In fact, through Doors Open Ontario, visitors will learn that the Billings Estate

in my riding of Ottawa South is Ottawa's oldest wood-frame house and was built between 1827 and 1829.

The Ontario Heritage Trust's most recognizable symbols are the blue-and-gold plaques that have been unveiled at over 1,200 sites in our province, which tell the stories of the people, places and events that helped shape Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the minister: Could he please tell us about the important work the Ontario Heritage Trust engages in?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. Since 2003, our government has invested \$74 million through the Ontario Heritage Trust to support and protect heritage across the province. Some of their other programs include:

—the provincial register program, with over 6,300 bylaws and 15,000 properties entered from heritage conservation districts;

—Trails Open Ontario, which provides province-wide profiles for 48 partner organizations and opportunities for the public to explore trails during 56 events in 54 communities; and

—to coincide with the World War I centennial this year, on February 14 we launched Ontario Heritage Week at CFB Borden. Lest we forget.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, last week, the Ontario PC Party learned that Patrick Dillon of the Working Families Coalition is preparing a lawsuit against Her Majesty's loyal opposition for alleged defamation. That letter coincides with your action against our party leader, Tim Hudak, and the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Working Families spends millions of union dollars on personal attacks and misrepresenting our party's policies. Isn't this just another example of Working Families, a well-connected special interest group, working hand in glove with the Liberal government to silence the opposition?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

I'd like to provide the member with an opportunity to tie that into government policy or to maybe reword that so that the government can answer a question that's based on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm quite concerned with the personal conversations that are going on while I'm trying to do a ruling. While it's not considered unparliamentary, it sure is disrespectful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs injecting his own wisdom any time.

I'll give you an opportunity to fix that question, please.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'll retract with, Patrick Dillon was appointed by your government to the Ontario College of Trades and multiple agencies.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

That's not the depth of the question. The question is about a lawsuit. The question is about that circumstance. I'd like you to see if you can do that. If not, you'll have to redirect it. Try again.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: How many agencies does Patrick Dillon sit on?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's appropriate. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's an interesting question: "How many agencies does Pat Dillon sit on?" Mr. Speaker, I know he sits on the referral board for the College of Trades.

I think that Ontarians get tired when politicians start raising individuals in the House when they're not in a position to be able to defend—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He doesn't know what his job is. How much more pathetic can you be?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, come to order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need assistance on this side.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me right, as I recall, the first people to appoint Pat Dillon to anything around here were the PC Party.

It's unfortunate. When people dedicate their lives to public service, when people dedicate their lives to serving on boards and committees, they really deserve better than that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: You didn't answer the question: How many?

Acting Premier, Ornge might have created untold suffering and wasted billions if the member from Newmarket—Aurora hadn't doggedly unearthed truths that you want to bury. Today Ornge is the subject of an OPP investigation. Taxpayers might have believed the Liberals' \$40-million estimated cost to cancel two gas plants had the member from North Bay not demanded an accurate account. Today we know the true cost was \$1.1 billion. Your government's evasions have led to a second OPP investigation.

Our questions are serious. These lawsuits are frivolous. What makes you think the courts will back your schemes to silence opposition critics and stop us from telling the truth?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Given the circumstances that we are faced with, I think I'm going to allow that question to be asked as a question of government, whether or not they believe that what their—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In free speech?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton is very close.

So I'm going to allow that to happen.

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Well, Mr. Speaker, asking a question about health care in a supplementary to a question that involves something completely different kind of puts a minister at a bit of a disadvantage, because I'm not the Minister of Health.

I'll respond to this very curtly and very shortly, referring to the first question. It's very easy: People don't have to worry about others anywhere being concerned about lawsuits if they simply tell the truth.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and infrastructure. Despite the fact that biweekly meetings on the girder issue were occurring within his office from December 2012 onward, which included his political staff, his chief of staff, the deputy minister, deputy minister's staff, and with minutes that were forwarded to the Premier's office, and despite the fact that a decision was made in the minister's own office on February 14 not to take action on safety issues surrounding these girders, is the minister telling this Legislature that not one single member of his political staff briefed the minister or sought guidance from the minister on this public safety issue, the biggest infrastructure project the minister was responsible for?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying and that's exactly the truth, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to be very clear about this: There have been discussions about every single project ongoing. There were no discussions at all with me, and when I asked my deputy in early June if there had been any issues with the girders requiring safety or concern, there wasn't.

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When I did become aware of it, I took extremely strong action, including an independent review, hiring independent legal counsel. As a matter of fact, much of that work going on with the review of those events still continues in looking at how to improve oversight on projects, and this government will be advancing ways to do that.

The public safety concern is always number one. That's why we panelled the leading engineers in the country. That's why we did an independent review. That's why there were two studies that were done. The government acted once it understood the situation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Is it true that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tried to quietly

sweep the issue under the carpet and allow substandard girders to be installed, only to stop the installation when the Windsor Star was going to expose the safety concerns?

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Probablement, c'est plus facile que je réponde en français parce que l'autre côté ne comprend pas l'anglais. Je vais expliquer très lentement. Il y a des réunions chaque deux semaines. Ce n'est pas sur le sujet des « girders », que les « girders » sont saufs ou non. Ça, c'est très peu.

I'll try it now in English. There were biweekly meetings. They were not about the safety of the girders. There is a public inquiry, two supplementary reports. There is more paper on this. Prior to June, there were no discussions in my office relating to safety of girders. There were many discussions about girders biweekly, because it's a big project and it would be pretty hard to go through years without talking about the project.

Mais, en fait, j'espère que quand je parle français c'est plus clair qu'en anglais.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario has more than 50,000 not-for-profit organizations that deliver vital services and help build prosperous and vibrant communities.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, Agincourt Community Services Association is a not-for-profit organization that provides quality services for children, youth, homeless and newcomer Canadians.

I know our government recognizes the contributions of the Ontario not-for-profit sector, and our government and the not-for-profit sector share similar goals. Over the past few years, our government has launched several initiatives to build better understanding of the government in terms of strengthening the relationship with this sector.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please share with the House the information about the volunteer strategy consultations? What is the goal, and who is participating?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that excellent question.

I really enjoy this aspect of the ministry because I get to see what Ontarians can do at their best. The not-for-profit sector is filled with individuals who embody true, active citizenship.

In 2011, our government released the Partnership Project report. It included six key recommendations to create a stronger relationship between the not-for-profit sector and government. In this spirit, we've launched the Ontario Volunteer Strategy consultations. Consultations have taken place in Ajax, Thunder Bay, Mississauga, Ottawa, Markham, London and Toronto.

Consultation participants were not only from the not-for-profit sector but also from the private sector and

education. We spoke to other ministries and other provinces. In fact, we consulted with other countries.

We know that the not-for-profit sector here in this province is filled with individuals who invest their time, energy and skill, and we are proud of our not-for-profit volunteers here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the minister for his response and for helping to build important social infrastructure in our province.

Through the 2010 Partnership Project round-table discussions, almost all of the non-profit participants told us that they often had some difficulty accessing relevant government information. This information is important for their operations, administration and annual charitable status reporting.

I also know that not-for-profits need information that is easily available and comprehensive when it comes to government programs, resources and funding opportunities.

I know the minister has been working very hard and passionately over the past year on this file. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House more about the initiatives that our government has undertaken to support the not-for-profit sector in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for that great question, and I do have some great news. Along with our partners in ServiceOntario, we're putting the final touches on an online channel for the not-for-profit sector that will provide easy access to information on funding, regulations and legal information.

I had a great time earlier this month taking part in the launch of the province's Pan/Parapan Am volunteer legacy. We've created a certification program that recognizes skills acquired through volunteer placement, as well as a first-stop gateway for volunteers looking for opportunities in the games.

Additionally, we're working with other ministries to find ways to reduce the administrative burden and ensure that government initiatives consider the business needs for the not-for-profit sector. For example, we're participating in the government's Open for Business strategy in the not-for-profit sector and various ministries to find ways to simplify the transfer payment process for not-for-profit agencies.

Mr. Speaker, our government prioritizes what's most important to our citizens: the right to the best health care and education. But we also know that we have to make investments in the not-for-profit sector and social enterprise, and we're proud of the work we're doing on this side of the House.

NURSES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, over the weekend Ontario residents learned that your government gave the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the

Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, and Working Families Coalition member union the Ontario Nurses' Association \$40 million, supposedly to assist nurses your government is firing to get retrained and find new employment. This money was given using an extremely unorthodox trust arrangement, which allows two of the nursing groups to keep any unspent money. In other words, you created an incentive for them to not spend this money on front-line nurses, and, Minister, they didn't. In fact, they only spent \$236,000 on front-line nursing jobs, but racked up \$6 million in expenses.

Acting Premier, what are you doing right now to get the \$40 million back to the people of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to that allegation.

I think it's important to remember where we were back in 2005. Six thousand nurses had been fired by the previous government and, in fact, their plan is to do the same again, if they have that chance. The nursing workforce was unstable, and I think we would all agree there was an instability there that was resulting in nurses leaving Ontario. Hospitals were running massive deficits. They were projecting that they would need to lay off 750 nurses.

This fund was created, and it is a protected fund. That money must be used to retrain nurses who are moving from one area of specialty to another. That fund is protected.

It turns out that the need that was at that time expected to be used within a year—Speaker, it turns out that need was not there, because of other changes we have made. I'll speak more to it in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Acting Premier, the most generous possible interpretation of the Nursing Retention Fund boondoggle is that the RNAO, RPNAO and ONA are utterly incompetent project managers and cannot be trusted to serve as stewards of taxpayer money.

Acting Premier, according to public accounts, volume 3 from 2012-13, the RNAO and RPNAO received over \$18 million of taxpayers' money combined, ostensibly to run various programs.

Given their terrible performance with the Nursing Retention Fund, Acting Premier, would your government immediately freeze the flow of taxpayers' money to the RNAO and RPNAO, and order immediate value-for-money audits of all these programs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If anyone had any doubt that the attack on nurses would continue, that doubt is now erased, Speaker. I think it's outrageous that the party opposite would attack those nurses who are on the front

lines of our health care system, caring for the people in our system.

Just to be clear on the Nursing Retention Fund, I have met with the management committee. I have asked them to come back. I met with them in January. They have until the end of May to come back with an idea on how that money can be used to support the transformation in our health care system that is now under way.

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On this side of the House, we value our nurses. We understand we are in a time of transition. That's a difficult transition. We are there to support our nurses as we move services from acute-care hospitals into the community.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. According to the Premier's own press release during the Liberal leadership race, she bragged that as Minister of Transportation, she oversaw the construction of the Windsor-Essex parkway. The current minister, in July, wrote of the agreement negotiated—and I quote you directly from your own writing: "We may have compromised our ability to enforce the law by negotiating our authority away."

Why did the minister fail to act when he knew that he was compromising public safety on the Herb Gray Parkway by negotiating away any kind of authority you had?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read very slowly again from the note, the one piece of paper that the members opposite didn't want to have the public see: "Minister's office ... staff were first briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013, and the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013."

This is a piece of paper written in the file by officials, independently of any politician or minister, to make it very clear that all the other references to the Herb Gray Parkway were not discussions about the girders. I know that fact is unpleasant and uncomfortable for the third party, but it is a fact that is really pretty hard to discuss.

As we went through the review over the summer and we looked at who was overseeing this project, a lot of decisions were made that caused me concern, which led me to the independent review, including the negotiation of the project agreement. That is all well documented, but that is all long after June.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This minister wrote—and I quote you again—"We may have compromised our ability to enforce the law by negotiating our authority away." You wrote that yourself.

Documents released through freedom of information repeatedly show the Ministry of Transportation being critical of the project agreement because it does not allow the MTO to exercise its role and responsibilities as the legislated road authority and puts the public interest at risk.

Why did the minister hide the fact he knew that the project agreement on the Herb Gray Parkway put the safety of people in this province at risk?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there is a review going on right now of the AFP process—as you probably know, because we've discussed this before—on how we can improve it, because it's a new and innovative project, and when we do new and innovative things, we review them.

There is a dispute resolution process in there. It was something that I had commented on, the entire time I was minister. That is a full stop. It is not relating to the issues that the member is confusing it with.

I first raised this issue in early June with my deputy. My deputy said very clearly to me that no specific issues had been raised around the girders' safety with her. I went to the deputy of infrastructure. I asked the same question; he told me the same thing. I asked them to review. On June 19, I got a briefing based on that review—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and they discovered the same issues that the member is now making reference to. I think that's clear.

J'espère que ce n'est pas nécessaire de répéter en français une autre fois, mais je choisis une autre langue si c'est plus clair—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

FIREFIGHTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Speaker, every member in this House knows how donations make a big difference. Ontarians contribute generously to a variety of causes. Their donations can do anything from feeding an empty stomach to saving a life. Without the thoughtful contributions of countless Ontarians, so many would do without. I've seen this generosity extended in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

As a province, we do our best to help those in need and to extend that help as far as our reach can go, including the global community. I understand that the government of Ontario recently donated firefighting equipment to the Dominican Republic. Speaker, will the minister inform this House and residents in my riding about this important initiative?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for the question. It was through a surplus assets distribution program at Ontario Shared Services that the Ontario government was able to donate surplus firefighting equipment to the Dominican Republic.

Ontario Shared Services first received a request from Firefighters Without Borders Canada in January. This is a registered charity whose goal is to assist emergency services worldwide.

Working with Firefighters Without Borders Canada, Ontario Shared Services identified about 270 coats, 282 pants, 46 boots and 42 helmets that will be donated to the Dominican Republic to help fight fires. These items come from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, fire protection services in Thunder Bay. Firefighters Without Borders Canada is in the process of shipping them to the Dominican Republic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the Minister of Government Services for that helpful update. I commend the minister and the government for their generosity, and Firefighters Without Borders Canada for all the great work they do around the world.

The Ontario government's commitment to helping its neighbours around the world is admirable, as is the active role Ontario plays in the global community, supporting those in need.

Here at home, we appreciate the hard work of the Toronto Fire Services in Scarborough–Guildwood. Stations 231 and 234 are in my riding, providing comfort and security to our residents.

I know that this donation of firefighting equipment will help save the lives of Dominican firefighters and the people they protect. Speaker, I have heard of similar donations to countries around the world. It's a wonderful way to help those in need. Minister, have other provinces in Canada made similar donations?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to say that Ontario is not the only province to donate firefighting goods to countries in need. Through partnerships with Firefighters Without Borders Canada, New Brunswick has donated approximately 60 sets of firefighting gear to date. British Columbia has donated eight pallets of firefighting gear, and Quebec has two departments that are also making donations.

We certainly recognize, here in Ontario, the great impact of such generosity and know that by combining with other provinces, our impact can be even greater. Programs such as this exist so that surplus assets are not thrown away when others can make use of them.

Recognizing the needs of others, such as the Dominican Republic, can help save lives. We are proud to help the Dominican Republic, and we are grateful for our partnership with Firefighters Without Borders Canada.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Northumberland Child Development Centre has operated in my riding for over two decades and has always had an excellent record of service and care. They have built trusting relationships with the families they serve and have helped the children they work with take great strides in becoming valued members in our community.

These relationships are vital to the development of these individuals, and jeopardizing those established rela-

tionships would be hugely detrimental to their progress. Minister, would you agree with this?

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things that we do to help support child care—and I take it that this is related to a child care question. One of the things that we do to help support special-needs children in child care is to provide funding for special-needs resourcing, but the funding for special-needs resourcing is actually managed by the local service manager, because in fact money for child care flows not directly from the Ministry of Education to the child care operator. It flows from the Ministry of Education to the municipal service manager, and it's actually the municipal service manager that makes all decisions about which agency requires various services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Back to the minister. This government can waste billions of dollars on gas plant scandals, Ornge and eHealth, which have led to several OPP investigations, but when it comes to the reallocation of funds, your government has attacked our most vulnerable.

The NCDC's integrated funding model formerly allocated \$1.6 million for roughly 500 children receiving child care services in Northumberland. This plan was supported by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for years. After the transfer to your ministry, though, the integrated model has been done away with. Now, \$1.3 million will be going to fund roughly 100 children in child care, with only \$167,000 left to service almost 450 remaining children.

Since your ministry took over, 90% of the funding is now servicing only 20% of our most vulnerable. This is Liberalnomics at its worst.

Minister, will you finally get a handle on the development services portfolio, step in and reallocate—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things, actually, that has happened since child care funding came to the Ministry of Education is that we actually have been working quite extensively on modernizing that file. Part of that has been the transition to all of our four- and five-year-olds being in full-day kindergarten, but we've also been working with our municipal service managers to modernize the whole child care sector.

Part of that has actually been putting, for the first time ever, an actual funding model in place. Previous to this portfolio coming to the Minister of Education, there actually wasn't a formal funding model. We now have a funding model. But there has been significant transitional funding allocated to each of the service managers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm in the process of dismissal. I'm sorry, we didn't have a chance to get a—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This afternoon. Thank you.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of the National Day of Mourning for persons killed or injured in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for a National Day of Mourning. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: In addition to the folks I introduced earlier this morning, I'm pleased to recognize and sincerely welcome our chief of police from Wingham, Ontario, Tim Poole, who's just arrived in the gallery. Joining him is the vice-chair of the Wingham police services board, Arnold Taylor. Joining him are also Ron Ross, Inspector Dan Grant, Laura Grant, Katy Milne, John Collie, Lisa Derby, Josh Jutras and Deb Mellor.

I'd also like to give another warm welcome to the Pham family: Heather and Tyler, Jordan and Josh, who might be a future page, and Heather's sister Rebecca. Joining them is OPPA president Jim Christie and an OPP officer from Huron county who leads with his heart, Patrick Armstrong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Was that the make-up from this morning?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We got it in.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Shalom. Today marks the solemn observance of Yom ha-Shoah, or the Day of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust refers to the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. During that period, six million Jews were murdered in the infamous death camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau and others.

Fifteen years ago, it was my privilege to table in this Legislature the Holocaust Memorial Day Act, which received enthusiastic all-party support and was proclaimed into law in Ontario in 1998. At that time, I am proud to say, Ontario became the first jurisdiction outside of Eretz Israel to establish the commemoration of Yom ha-Shoah as an annual one in accordance with the lunar Hebrew calendar.

As a result, ha-Shoah is and always will be an official day of observance by the province of Ontario. This is of crucial importance because this day provides us with an annual opportunity to reflect on the enduring lessons of the Holocaust and to continue to meet the challenge of the ongoing process of Holocaust education.

We welcome in the House today the heroic survivors of the Holocaust whose suffering tells its most relevant lessons about those years that our young people need to hear and learn from so that they, too, may combat the contemporary anti-Semitism, beginning with their own college and university campuses.

Mr. Speaker, by happy coincidence, the Holocaust Memorial Day Act was passed into law on December 10, 1998, which day also marked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, which was likewise inspired by those same lessons, the most important of which is summed up by the words "Never again."

NATURAL GAS RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My constituents are still reeling from the massive 40% gas hike approved by the OEB, and Enbridge Gas is already churning out the increased gas bills.

Seniors over 55, a group in my riding, have received their bill for the month of April that outlines the rate increase from Enbridge. I was under the impression, Speaker, that there was going to be a smoothing-out period to save people from being hit with the 40% increase instantly. It seems to me, though, from looking at the bill they sent to my office, that their gas supply rate will increase almost double, from 11.81 cents to 20.96 cents, by next month. This is not how they envisioned a smoothing-out.

As it is, consumer groups are still trying to make their voices heard by the OEB on this unprecedented rate increase. The special session would have opened up the process and ensured transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, the OEB refused to grant that special session and hear from consumers.

A petition is being circulated in my riding, opposing this increase and calling for that special session. I hope that the OEB can understand why the residents are concerned about this. I encourage the residents in my riding and across Ontario to call the OEB at 1-877-632-2727 and tell them the impact of this 40% hike in their lives.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize the contributions of Armenian Canadians and to reflect on the Armenian genocide that occurred 99 years ago.

In 1915, the Ottoman government began a mass extermination of Armenians. As a result, more than 1.5 million people were killed. During the genocide, approximately 1,500 Armenians found refuge in Canada. Many settled here in Ontario, in cities such as Brantford, St. Catharines, Windsor and Toronto. In the 1950s, a second wave of Armenians came to Canada, calling Ontario home.

We can be very proud of the contributions Armenians make to Ontario. Armenian businesses and working professionals benefit our economy, and Armenian Canadian artists have enriched our society: artists such as Atom Egoyan, who is not only an award-winning director, but also an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Yesterday, Minister Chan, the MPP from Oak Ridges–Markham and I attended the annual Armenian genocide memorial held by the Toronto Armenian community. This sombre occasion provides us with an opportunity to remember and to resolve anew to never let these atrocities happen again. It also gives us a chance to reflect on the importance of Armenian Canadians in our province.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to announce to the House today two recipients of the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism in my riding.

On April 10, I was pleased to attend the presentation of the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. The award is presented by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to honour 14 Ontarians and four organizations for their commitment to volunteerism and long-standing service to their communities. I'm proud to say that two constituents of mine, Captain Ryan Edgar and Enci Dhanoosingh of Port Perry, were among the 14 Ontarians to receive this very special honour.

Captain Edgar is a police constable and, for the past 17 years, a volunteer firefighter for the Scugog fire department. As a member of the executive board for Port Perry's firefighters association, Ryan has helped raise more than \$100,000 for charities such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Durham region Special Olympics, as well as local food drives and community organizations.

Ms. Dhanoosingh volunteers countless hours of her time to support a number of organizations in her community, including Community Care Durham, the Port Perry Seniors Club and the Scugog Shores Museum Village. A senior herself, Enci volunteers as a driver, helping other seniors get to medical appointments and complete errands such as banking and grocery shopping.

Edgar and Dhanoosingh serve as excellent examples of what can be done to help improve our communities by

helping others in need. I'm pleased to thank them and recognize them today.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today I want to talk about the great importance of organ donation. In Ontario, nearly 1,500 people, and 171 people in the Peel region, are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant—this is something that we can definitely raise awareness about. One person dies every three days while waiting for an organ transplant, but deaths on the waiting list can be prevented. Each individual, each donor, can save up to eight lives through organ donation and can enhance the lives of up to 75 people through their tissue donation. Put simply, organ and tissue donation registration can save lives.

I encourage everyone to register at beadonor.ca. Registration is so important, because we found that, in the absence of donor registration, only 60% of families consent to organ donation. Families need to know what your intention is.

Again, I urge everyone to take the time to register at beadonor.ca. Registration is simple, it only takes a couple of minutes and it makes a huge difference in saving lives across Ontario.

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Again, I urge you all to take the time to educate yourselves and to educate others about the great importance of giving the gift of life. It is so vitally important, and it is one of the greatest examples of civic duty and civic responsibility.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Earlier this month, I had the distinct pleasure of attending the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum's annual volunteer appreciation dinner, which honoured a total of 46 volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the community. Among the 46 volunteers, 12 were being recognized for the first time and 29 were longer-term volunteers.

I would especially like to acknowledge and thank five volunteers in particular: John Aaltink, Sharon McFadden, Rick Preston, Lynne Rubben and Valerie Saunders, who all have given over 150 hours each to the museum.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum opened its doors in 1971. It includes five historic structures from the former township of Whitchurch: the Bogartown schoolhouse, a pioneer log cabin, a Victorian farmhouse, a barn, and Vandorf Public School.

In 2012, a community centre funded by all three levels of government was built to join the two schoolhouses. The new facility includes a research room, exhibition gallery and discovery room as well as rental spaces.

All the volunteers work closely with the museum staff in all areas of museum operations. These include the maintenance of the museum buildings and grounds, the planning of special events, education, exhibits and fund-raising initiatives.

I couldn't think of a better way to end the month that includes National Volunteer Week than by celebrating the hard-working volunteers of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

AGGREGATE RECYCLING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today, I rise with a cautious sense of optimism. You see, last week we celebrated Earth Day, which also happened to be the one-year anniversary since I introduced Bill 56, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. If enacted, Bill 56 would allow contractors to incorporate recycled aggregates when bidding on construction projects paid for with public money.

Increasing aggregate recycling and the use of recycled aggregates in Ontario is a very important initiative that has received widespread support. Bill 56 received unanimous support here in this chamber at second reading debate. It was a recommendation made in the Aggregate Recycling Act review. It has been passed by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and is now awaiting third reading.

Bill 56 has received widespread support outside of this chamber as well, where many businesses, municipalities and residents have called for the bill's adoption.

The bill has been debated, it has been examined and it has had public hearings at committee. Now all that remains is one final vote. That means that the Liberal House leader is now the only person standing between Bill 56 and royal assent. The government House leader is the member for Kitchener Centre. I know he understands the need for this legislation, and I believe he supports it. As we mark the one-year anniversary of Bill 56's introduction, the time has come for the government House leader to schedule Bill 56 for third and final reading. Let's get it done. Let's get this bill passed. Let's promote aggregate recycling in Ontario.

KHALSA DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past Sunday I had the opportunity to attend the annual Khalsa Day parade along with our Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, and other colleagues. The parade was organized by the Ontario Sikh and Gurudwara Council.

The Khalsa Day parade celebrates the birth of Khalsa in 1699. It raises awareness about the Sikh philosophy, principles, values and heritage. Khalsa personifies [*Remarks in Punjabi*]—negation of casteism; [*Remarks in Punjabi*]—protection of the persecuted; [*Remarks in Punjabi*]—tolerance; justice for all; and an inclusive society.

The annual Khalsa Day is a day to celebrate these values and to offer prayers. It is a day for reflection and it is also a day for spiritual renewal. On this day, Sikhs around the world renew their belief that only tolerance, justice, equality, fairness and respect for difference can move us forward to the ultimate human goal: peace and prosperity for all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Ontario Sikh and Gurudwara Council for organizing this wonderful event.

DAVE MOUNSEY MEMORIAL FUND

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Constable Vu Pham was an OPP officer of 15 years working out of the Huron county attachment. He was tragically shot and killed on March 8, 2010. Earlier today at Queen's Park, the Dave Mounsey Memorial Fund presented a defibrillator to Wingham, Ontario, chief of police Tim Poole, and vice-chair of the board Arnold Taylor, in memory of Constable Vu Pham and on behalf of his wife Heather and his boys Tyler, Jordan and Josh.

The Dave Mounsey Memorial Fund was created in 2009 by family and friends of Dave, an OPP constable also from Huron county who passed away in the line of duty as a result of an auto collision in 2003. Prior to his collision and untimely death, Dave and his wife, Brenda, raised funds through a marathon to purchase a defibrillator for a local fire department.

The fund was created to honour those police, military, paramedics and firepersons who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom and security that we take for granted. Upon the death of such a member, the fund will donate a defibrillator to the local emergency services or a public school, at the choice of the family. Given that Mr. Klees is giving a tribute on First Responders Day, Thursday, the presentation today is perfectly timed and fitting, for in the spirit of community safety, we are recognizing so many who have paid the ultimate price.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize that we were joined today at the presentation by OPP commissioner Vince Hawkes, who stated, "Provincial constables Dave Mounsey and Vu Pham were fine officers who tragically lost their lives protecting the public. It is a very fitting tribute to remember them by providing equipment that other first responders can use to save lives." We were also joined, as I mentioned earlier, by OPPA president Jim Christie.

For a number of reasons, it has been an honour and a privilege to be part of this tribute today, and I thank my colleagues for their support as well.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report from the Auditor General of Ontario entitled Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation's Modernization Plan.

ANNUAL REPORT, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that on April 22, 2014, the 2012 annual report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health was tabled.

CLAUDETTE BOYER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for seniors on a point of order.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Madame Claudette Boyer, a former member of this Legislature from the riding of Ottawa-Vanier from 1999 to 2003, with a representative from each caucus speaking up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm honoured, on behalf of the PC caucus, to begin the tribute to Claudette Boyer, who served here from 1999 to 2003. Claudette had a life before Parliament as well. In fact, she served as a teacher in the Ottawa area for 30 years. It would be interesting, if we had a little more time for research, to look at the differences that she would have made in the lives of so many people in a 30-year career as a teacher. I've known so many teachers over my lifetime and know the difference that they have made.

In 1982, Claudette Boyer was elected as a school trustee for the Ottawa Board of Education, and she served for a term there. She also was known as a tireless volunteer and manager of multiple municipal, provincial and federal election campaigns. She was clearly devoted to the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, as she served on campaigns for Jean-Robert Gauthier, Bernard Grandmaitre and Guy Cousineau. She was clearly very, very steeped in a political background before she had the opportunity to run for elected office here.

What I found remarkable and perhaps surprising—someone has to be the first, but I was surprised that it took till 1999—was that Claudette Boyer was the first francophone woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I would have thought that that would have happened sooner, but the records from the library do not lie: The first francophone woman was elected in 1999, and that distinction today and forever will belong to Claudette Boyer.

She was a tireless advocate for French language rights, and that was clearly indicated and clearly demonstrated in her career here. She was very actively involved in the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Franco-Ontarian Teachers' Association.

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While she was here, she served as the Liberal Party's critic for francophone affairs and women's issues.

I don't have a great deal of information from Ms. Boyer's legislative career here, but I do have some quotes that would indicate some of the things that she was passionate about. She was clearly passionate about French language rights and Franco affairs, but she was also very, very passionate about mental health and domestic violence. I'll give you a couple of her quotes.

Brian's Law was a mental health legislation reform: "Yes, I will be voting in support of this bill, but with a

certain degree of skepticism. I truly hope this bill will provide the groundwork for progressive action in the field of mental health. This government must provide sufficient funding and resources to ensure that Brian's Law is more than mere lip service."

Today, the fight for mental health goes on. It continues today, and I want to thank Claudette Boyer for being, at that time, more a less a pioneer, as we had turned very little attention to the issues of mental health in earlier days. It has become more and more an issue that we deal with more and more, and I think everyone does agree that it is a priority.

She sat as a Liberal MPP from 1999 to 2001 and sat as an independent MPP from 2001 to 2003. She did not seek re-election in 2003.

In 2004, Claudette was awarded the Prix anniversaire by the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens in recognition of her years of service to the community. She was recognized for that commitment for so many years.

In 2007, she became the president of the Ottawa chapter of the Francophone Assembly of Ontario.

Perhaps fittingly, she passed away in Ottawa in 2013 at the Montfort Hospital, which was also a passion of Claudette Boyer's. She fought very strongly and valiantly to ensure that that institution remained open in the Ottawa area. Not that anyone is looking forward to that time in their life, but it is probably somewhat poetic that she did have her last days in that hospital that she regarded as so important to the people of that area and that she fought so hard to maintain.

Her husband, Jean-Robert Boyer, did predecease her. She leaves behind her three children, Michel (Carole), Pierre (Linda Cardinal), and Julie, her grandchildren Jean-Sébastien and Jasmine, her sisters Nicole (Maurice Miljow), Lyse, and Francine (Gilles Gatién), and several nephews and cousins.

We want to thank Claudette Boyer for her commitment to the people of Ontario, particularly to the people of Ottawa-Vanier, and we want to thank her family for allowing her to give in this regard, as all members of the assembly do. We want to properly pay tribute to her for that service, and wish her rest in peace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further remarks.

Mr. Michael Prue: As a young rookie arriving here in this Legislature, one of the first people I had the privilege of meeting was Madame Boyer. She was known around this place as the first francophone woman MPP. She was also, by the time that I arrived here in 2001, having her own personal difficulties during her tenure as an MPP.

I knew her personally as a warm, welcoming, caring and dedicated individual who spoke most often and most passionately about her riding, about the people who lived there, and about the broader Franco-Ontarian community in Ottawa and elsewhere.

She was a woman of passion for public service, particularly within the Franco-Ontarian community, but she could easily go outside of that community, and often did

so. She was a true champion of the people who sent her to Queen's Park.

As has been said, she was 30 years a teacher. She was with the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. She was a school trustee for four years.

She became a candidate for the Liberals in the new riding of Ottawa-Vanier. It was a brand new riding; it had just been set up. She ran on a strong platform—two things. One was saving seven schools within the riding, the majority of which were French-speaking schools that were scheduled to be shut down, and the other thing was to save the Montfort Hospital, which was the only French-speaking hospital at that time in the Ottawa area, and probably still is. She ran on that platform and was easily elected.

I'll tell you, in those years, in that time in 1999, she ran against the tide. We, as politicians, know how difficult it is to run against the tide. That was the time, of course, of Mike Harris's second election, where he was elected with a further majority government. To be a Liberal running against that tide and to win so handily speaks volumes about the respect she had in her community.

She was a strong voice in this House, even during trying times. I can still picture her sitting in a desk way up in the corner. She was an independent by the time I got here or maybe shortly after I arrived, and she sat in the corner. It was difficult to get the attention or the notice of the Speaker because, as we all know, we speak in rotation here. It's only every so often that a question would be given to an independent member or they would be allowed or be heard to speak on an issue. But she stood on every opportunity that was available to her to talk about the issues that had sent her here.

Until the last day here, she spoke of the needs and the hopes of those she represented. Again, as was said, after the Legislature she became the executive director for l'Association des communautés francophones d'Ottawa.

She died at Montfort. Again, as has been said, it was a place that she had championed. It is a place that she had spent her four years here to make sure that it stayed open, and it was there for her in the end. She came here to save that hospital and to defend the rights of individuals living in Ottawa who spoke French as a first language—and sometimes as an only language—to be served in French and to be able to understand the issues that surrounded them.

To her and to her family, I say: Merci pour toutes les choses. Merci à la famille, the family who shared her with us in good times and in bad. Most especially, thank you for being the champion she was for the Franco-Ontarian community and for all the broader community of this wonderful province and this wonderful country where we need to do so much more to protect the rights of minority francophones in Ontario and minority francophones wherever they live. She was the person who led the way to show us how to do it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further remarks?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de rendre hommage à l'une de nos anciennes collègues ici, M^{me} Claudette Boyer, qui a été la première femme francophone élue à l'Assemblée législative en 1999, comme représentante du comté d'Ottawa-Vanier, et que la maladie a emportée bien trop tôt l'an dernier.

La famille de Claudette Boyer lui a toujours été chère. J'aimerais reconnaître ses enfants, Julie, Pierre et Michel; ses belles-filles; et ses petits-enfants, Jean-Sébastien et Jasmine, qui étaient pour elle une source de joie et d'espérance.

Claudette Boyer's life was guided by a singular mission: to promote the francophone community of Ontario.

Dès son jeune âge, Claudette Boyer avait la ferme conviction qu'avoir des racines françaises en Ontario prendrait tout son sens seulement si les francophones avaient la possibilité de grandir, de s'éduquer, de travailler et de vivre en conformité avec leur identité culturelle. Et cette mission devait se concrétiser, selon elle, dans sa vie familiale, dans ses activités professionnelles comme enseignante, dans la gamme d'activités bénévoles qu'elle organisait et dans toute la société civile francophone de l'Ontario et du Canada.

Elle s'est donc engagée cœur et âme dans les associations professionnelles enseignantes pour assurer une plus grande qualité dans l'enseignement. Elle s'est impliquée activement dans les organisations sociales et communautaires partout dans l'est de l'Ontario. Elle a aussi toujours travaillé pour les démunis, celles et ceux qui n'ont pas de voix sur la scène publique mais dont les besoins sont si criants.

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Claudette Boyer was also a pillar of the federal and provincial Liberal Party in Ottawa, serving as president of the Ottawa-Vanier riding association and brilliantly managing campaigns for Jean-Robert Gauthier, Bernard Grandmaître et Guy Cousineau. Her energy and optimism were an inspiration to candidates and volunteers alike.

N'en ayant pas encore fini avec son activisme, Claudette Boyer a aussi dirigé l'ACFO d'Ottawa avec l'énergie, la passion et le dévouement qui font qu'elle occupe une place de choix dans le cœur des Franco-Ontariens.

Tous ces engagements visaient la réalisation de sa mission pour que les francophones occupent leur juste place en Ontario et au Canada. Efficace et perspicace, elle ne ratait jamais une occasion d'influencer les politiques publiques en faveur du peuple francophone.

Dear colleagues, like many of us, Claudette Boyer gave her time and energy and shared her talent and ideas for the betterment of Ontarians.

Le cheminement de Claudette Boyer, l'épouse bien-aimée de Jean-Robert, la mère de famille, l'enseignante, l'activiste communautaire, l'organisatrice politique et la députée provinciale, fait que notre profession de politicien, malgré tous ses défis, est une profession noble. Je veux donc profiter de l'occasion pour remercier mon amie, Claudette Boyer, et remercier chaleureusement sa

famille. Merci pour son engagement. Merci d'avoir partagé cette grande dame humaniste avec nous et de nous avoir permis d'en ressortir tous plus grands.

En 2014, l'Ontario français ne serait pas le peuple fier et déterminé qu'il est devenu sans la mission bien accomplie que s'était donnée Claudette Boyer. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. As we always do traditionally, we'll have a copy of a DVD prepared with the tributes, and copies of Hansard presented to the family members. I thank all members for their thoughtful and heartfelt comments. It's much appreciated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RAISE A GLASS

TO ONTARIO ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR PORTER UN TOAST À L'ONTARIO

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act /
Projet de loi 191, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Todd Smith: An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act, or, as I like to call it, the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, 2014, amends the Liquor Control Act. It will cut red tape for brewers, wineries and cideries operating in Ontario. The bill eliminates transportation regulations. It cuts warehousing red tape and allows wineries, breweries and cideries to sell the products of other wineries or brewers at their on-site stores. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today in Ontario and throughout Canada, we pause to remember workers who have been killed on the job or who have suffered work-related injury or illness. We lower our flags to honour friends, neighbours and those loved ones whose lives have been lost or affected by workplace incidents—incidents that are almost always foreseeable and almost always preventable.

Since the 1980s, the Ontario government has recognized the National Day of Mourning. It's a day of remembrance, and it's a day when all of us must strengthen our resolve to ensure that the tragedy of fallen workers and their families is not in vain.

Our government has almost doubled the number of workplace health and safety inspectors across the province. Since 2003, Speaker, the number of work-related traumatic injuries in Ontario has declined by 30%.

But we know that we need to prevent injuries before they happen. That is why we have appointed Ontario's first-ever Chief Prevention Officer, and we're increasing our efforts to ensure that all workers know their rights and all workers know their responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

We are especially mindful of newcomers, and those whose first languages are not English or French, by providing information in a number of different languages. We also conduct annual health and safety blitzes into a variety of sectors and industries, to ensure that workers are safe on the job. For example, to protect young workers, the Ministry of Labour health and safety inspectors conduct inspections in workplaces where students and young people typically have summer jobs—often their very first job.

These efforts are a part of our newly integrated strategy to promote healthy and safe workplaces by trying to assist Ontario's most vulnerable workers, such as recent immigrants and young people. We try to support occupational health and safety improvements in small businesses. We address workplace hazards that are known to be severe and widespread.

We're making progress, but we must do more. As of July 1, workers and supervisors must be trained in workplace health and safety awareness.

We also know that falls from heights are a major cause of fatalities and injuries, so the ministry is consulting widely on the implementation of Working at Heights training standards.

We're also conducting comprehensive mining safety reviews in consultation with mining stakeholders, especially employers and workers, to further improve the health and the safety of workers in that particular sector.

Since October 2012, all provincially regulated workplaces have been required to display a poster outlining the rights and the responsibilities of workers, supervisors and employers on the job.

Together, Speaker, we must strive to build a strong workplace health and safety culture, one that focuses on injury and illness prevention. That is what the ministry is doing, and we're reaching out at the same time to all Ontarians to help us.

Whenever adversity comes to Ontario, we see Ontarians step up and work together for the greater good. Whether it's an ice storm, a flood or a forest fire, we are people who look out for one another. That's an important part of being an Ontarian.

Today, we ask that Ontarians don't wait for adversity. Today, we ask that all people of this province commit to taking every possible measure to prevent work-related injury, fatality and illness so that Ontario workers—all Ontario workers—get home safe and sound at the end of each working day.

Mr. Speaker, shortly I will ask that we observe a moment of silence for those who suffered workplace fatalities, injuries and illness in our province. Let us pay our respects and honour their memories, and let us renew that commitment to one another to ensure a future that is free of workplace fatality, injury or illness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? It is now time for responses.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I, too, am pleased to rise this afternoon to recognize the National Day of Mourning. April 28 each year is a time to commemorate workers who have been injured, killed or suffered any illnesses due to workplace incidents and related hazards. It is important for all of us to pay tribute to those individuals whose lives were affected by a workplace injury or illness and who are now striving to move forward with a better future.

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Today is also a day to remember all those whose lives were cut short. These tragedies affect not only a worker's family but also one's co-workers and an entire community.

Across Ontario, there will be many events and ceremonies held as a visible tribute to all this day. The purpose of this day of mourning serves as an excellent reminder to all of us to renew our commitment to improving the health and safety of all those in the workforce so we can prevent any further deaths, injuries and illnesses.

Speaker, it was back in 1984 that April 28 was established as the National Day of Mourning by the Canadian Labour Congress. In 1991, Canada's federal government passed legislation to recognize this day, and since then it has become an international movement. This year in particular marks exactly 100 years since the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed right here in Ontario—the important legislation that provides basic protection for workers and their employers to this very day.

Sadly, today reminds me of a loss close to home. A young man living in the Melbourne area, Jim Sanford, died in the hospital due to his injuries a few years ago. He was employed by an elevator business and had fallen while working on the elevators in the city of London.

While Ontario, and Canada overall, has made great progress in workplace safety, the number and rate of workplace fatalities and accidents is still unacceptably high. We may have some of the best health and safety legislation, yet the number of workers who are affected has failed to decrease. Many say that workplace health and safety is important, but the reality is that far too often, not enough is being done before incidents occur. Many of these workplace incidents are entirely preventable. Ontario can do better, and by enforcing the laws we have put in place, we can save even more workers' lives. We need to continue remaining vigilant that any legislation is comprehensive, monitored and strictly enforced.

While we take this day to honour the people who have passed away, we should also be reminded of our need to continue protecting and advocating for those who are

living. We should use this as a day to rally our workers to reflect on what needs to be done to further prevent deaths, injuries and illnesses in an ongoing initiative to maintain safe working conditions.

Speaker, on behalf of Tim Hudak and our entire PC caucus, I'm committed to continue standing up for hard-working individuals in Ontario and their ongoing safety in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Ms. Cindy Forster: On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrat caucus, I'm pleased to rise today to speak on this important issue. April 28 has been recognized across Canada as the International Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. The purpose is to remember and honour fallen workers and to renew our commitment to health and safety, to prevent further work-related deaths, injuries and diseases.

As provincial members, it's our duty in this House to ensure that we put good regulations and rules in place in Ontario to keep workers safe from harm while they're on the job. While directly affecting workers in Ontario, our responsibility doesn't end there, at the borders of our province. Our decisions and how we enact legislation and regulations can influence jurisdictions around the world and can help improve health and safety for workers across the globe.

On April 24, just a few days ago, we remembered the one-year anniversary of the terrible tragedy of the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh that killed 1,138 people and injured more than 2,000—where workers were paid a dollar a day to be killed.

The tragedy has prompted much-needed action on worker safety in Bangladesh in the garment industry, an industry worth \$22 billion and the second largest in the world, behind China. An accord on fire and safety was created which spells out independent safety standards, and more than 150 companies around the world have signed on. Safety reviews are published on a website, and if a factory fails, signatories are required to suspend manufacturing. While these steps are promising, Speaker, much more needs to be done to protect these workers, who play a huge role in the global economy.

But much more can be done in Ontario as well. In 2013, we lost 243 Ontario workers in fatal workplace accidents, and 232,249 claims were filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The latest statistics were released, and in the past 25 days alone, three more workers have died at the Vale Copper Cliff smelter in Sudbury, a construction site in Ottawa and a plastics plant in Vaughan. We need to reduce these numbers to zero and also provide support to the families of these workers who have lost their lives.

I know that my colleague and our labour critic, the member from Essex, would have loved to have been here today addressing this House on this issue. I thank him for his work every day while he tries to protect the safety of workers in this province.

In 2010, the Dean report was presented to the Minister of Labour at the time. A list of recommendations to im-

prove health and safety was laid out clearly. Some have been addressed, but the government has been dragging its feet on implementing important regulations that would go a long way to protecting workers. These regulations can save lives and need to be acted on as soon as possible. As representatives, we must lead the way in protecting Ontarians.

I want to take a moment to recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her work on fighting for improvements on the fall safety standards, after a young worker from the Kitchener–Waterloo area was killed during a construction accident not that long ago. And while some action has been taken by the ministry, the regulations have not gone far enough. Participation in safety training has taken too long to implement and is on a voluntary basis only. It needs to be mandatory. In order to ensure that standards are met, training has to be mandatory and there need to be enough enforcement officers to make sure that enforcement is actually taking place.

While I still have a moment or two, I want to just talk a bit about my riding, where we have a rich shipping history in Welland on the Welland Canal, constructed between I think 1913 and 1933. A life was lost every two months in the building of that canal. In 1928, the worst year for deaths during that construction, 28 workers died. The youngest to die was Antonio Collini, who was 15, and he was buried in a suit that he purchased with his very first paycheck. So the importance of remembering these lives is paramount as we continue our efforts to protect workers. In fact, a Fallen Workers Memorial Task Force was created, with a goal of erecting a memorial to all the workers who lost their lives while constructing the Welland Canal.

There is much work to be done, and I hope all three parties make workers' safety a priority to ensure that we are doing everything we can to create the safest working environment in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent that the chamber observe a moment of silence for those whose lives have been forever changed by a workplace injury, illness or fatality.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Do we agree?

Could I ask all people in the chamber to stand?

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

It is now time for petitions. The member from Durham.

PETITIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll soon be known as Mr. Petition. What a tragedy.

"Whereas Roseplain Solar Farm Partnership has applied to the Ministry of the Environment for an update in its renewable energy approval application for a solar farm development at 5240 Concession Road 4, RR#1 in the township of Uxbridge;

"Whereas residents adjacent to the proposed project strongly object to a large industrial development on" class 1 "valuable agricultural land and woodlands;

"Whereas possible adverse impacts include reduced property values" due to the appearance of the solar farm development in rural Ontario;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has announced cancellation of two proposed nuclear reactors because of surplus generating capacity and furthermore we, as citizens, are concerned that the paying of a large subsidy to a foreign company for many years to come will add to the already enormous public debt incurred for building additional generating capacity" like the gas plants;

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"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to proceed with this large scale industrial development, in view of the adverse impacts it will have on our community and our province."

I'm pleased to sign in support of this and present it to Meaghan, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Phil McNeely: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale du CECCE;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds

en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Je l'envoie en avant avec Victoria.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Coast Guard Auxiliary units are oftentimes the first responders to any emergency situation that occurs on our waterways;

"Whereas the use of green flashing lights by Coast Guard volunteers in their vehicles would help to cut down on their response time by alerting others on the roadways to their presence;

"Whereas these flashing green lights are currently prohibited from use in Coast Guard volunteers' vehicles under regulations in the Highway Traffic Act that restrict the use of flashing green lights to only the vehicles of volunteer firefighters and ministry-prescribed medical responders;

"Whereas the flashing green lights cost nothing to the government as they are bought and paid for by the volunteers themselves;

"Whereas, if the Coast Guard Auxiliary units were allowed the use of these flashing green lights in their vehicles, it would cut down the transportation time on the roadways, and this cut in time could very well mean the difference between life and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Coast Guard Auxiliary units either become prescribed medical responders, or a change to the act that adds ministry-prescribed volunteer first responders access to the use of the flashing green emergency light."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with Émilie.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Prue: I have a petition that is very lengthy, so I'm only going to read the "be it resolved." I have read it into the record several times already.

It is in French, though, so you'll have to bear with me.

« Que le ministre de l'Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7^e à la 12^e année d'études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n'auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d'une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de

fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je suis d'accord, and I will send it down with Ethan.

GREENBELT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

“Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

“Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department, Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

“Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

“Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Lavanya.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

“Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

“Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies.”

I fully support it, will sign it and send it to the Clerk with page Frank.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have the identical petition again, although this time it's in English, with a couple of copies in French. I will only read the “be it resolved” because it's very lengthy.

Be it resolved “That the Minister of Education intervene to locate an underutilized secondary school building in the neighbourhood of Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York and Leslieville that may be sold to or shared with both French school boards (public and Catholic) so that each may open their respective French secondary school (grades 7-12) by September 2014 and so that French students no longer must choose between travelling great distances to attend a French secondary school or giving up their French education in favour of a local English school and so that they may have the same benefit as their English counterparts, the right to attend a local secondary school in their neighbourhood.”

I'm in agreement and will affix my signature thereto and send it with page Gabriel.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale ...

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Merci, monsieur le Président. Je vous l'envoie avec page Ayesha.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

“Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

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“Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and I'll send it to the table with our new page Kaitlyn.

OSTOMY SUPPLIES

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank Susan Hunter from Brockville Pharmasave and Jennifer Barnes for their advocacy on this important issue. They did this petition themselves. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas inflation has risen almost 37% in the 21 years since 1993, and with the cost of ostomy supplies rising, on average, 2% yearly;

“Whereas there has been no increase in the ADP base amount;

“Whereas according to the 2009 survey, the data indicates that the average ostomy pouching system wear-time (flange and pouch) is five days;

“Whereas with an average suggested retail price of \$15 for each change, many persons with an ostomy are spending a minimum of \$1,500 and an average of \$2,400 per year, far exceeding the ADP grant and the intent of the 75% coverage;

“Whereas additionally, people with temporary ostomy receive no government support, adding an additional burden to their health care needs;

“Whereas they may have their temporary ostomy for a number of years, they receive no assistance through the ADP grant as the ostomy may one day be reversed;

“Whereas the association frequently receives phone calls from people who are unable to find the money to buy ostomy supplies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To act now and to raise the ADP grant amount to increase the coverage for ostomy supplies back to the

75% level that was set in 1993, and to increase coverage to include people who have a temporary ostomy.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send the petition to the table with page Zahra.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE

ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale ...

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Je vous envoie cette pétition avec page William.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

“Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

“Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

“Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature forcing university/college students”—

Hon. John Gerretsen: They are not.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to read on behalf of my constituents. The minister should not interrupt me, the minister without portfolio—“OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I sign it and support it and present it to Brendan, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have available this afternoon for petitions. Orders of the day? I recognize—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I understand that we have unanimous consent with respect to a motion regarding private bills. I would like to put that motion forward without notice at this point in time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Chair of Cabinet is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion with respect to private bills. Is there agreement in the House? Agreed. I recognize the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills put immediately without debate: Bills Pr22, Pr23, Pr27, Pr28 and Pr29, and that Mr. Delaney—who is sitting beside me here—may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr22 on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, and that Mr. Delaney may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr29 on behalf of Mr. Colle.

I move that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Gerretsen has moved that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills put immediately without debate: Bills Pr22, Pr23, Pr27, Pr28 and Pr29, and that Mr. Delaney may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr22 on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, and that Mr. Delaney may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr29 on behalf of Mr. Colle.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

434753 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

434753 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1360906 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Kwinter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

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1360906 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Kwinter moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL INC. ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Marchese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL INC. ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Marchese moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

YMCA OF
HAMILTON/BURLINGTON/BRANTFORD
ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Delaney moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

YMCA OF
HAMILTON/BURLINGTON/BRANTFORD
ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Delaney moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

394557 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Colle, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

394557 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Colle, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2014, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated third reading of Bill 21, the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane had completed his speech. Further debate. The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Very good, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. That was scintillating action that we just witnessed here in the Legislature, as we took care of business, and you did an excellent job looking after that as well.

I am pleased to stand and speak to Bill 21, which is the Employment Standards Amendment Act. I haven't had the opportunity yet—there are a number of members of the Legislature who haven't had the opportunity—so on behalf of my constituents in the Prince Edward-Hastings riding, stretching from Maynooth in the north to Milford in the south, I'm pleased to stand and bring some comments on this very important piece of legislation which, incidentally, the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting when we get to a vote on this.

This is the Leaves to Help Families, and I understand that the aim of this bill is a good one and a very noble one. We want to provide some opportunity for family members who have an ill or deceased child or family member the ability to stay at home and provide the care that they need. It is a great intention and again, we do support this bill.

I believe that all of us in our ridings know families that are undergoing extremely difficult circumstances, where a family member, in many, many cases, is afflicted with cancer. I have some good friends right now back in Prince Edward county who are dealing with this exact situation: The individual is off work.

For about a year now, we've been debating this bill. It's actually an improved version of the bill that was presented in the last session, and I believe it was Bill 30 at that time; it's now known as Bill 21. But there were changes that were made as a result of the ongoing debate

on this bill, and it's an improved version that we will be voting on this time around. It's an improvement that wouldn't have been possible, though, without some of the comments that have come from members of both the official opposition and the third party. There are all kinds of reasons and good ideas that come from the opposition parties, and we haven't seen a lot of real good ideas coming from the government on a whole matter of different issues.

We look forward, as we often do as members of the official opposition, in putting forward ideas on how we can get the province back on the right track. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has put forward his million jobs plan that we have been talking about a great deal. When we're losing the jobs that we are, we understand that a piece of legislation like this is very important for family members who are going through a trying time to continue to hold on to their employment in a very troublesome time in the life of their family.

We're often lectured, and I'm sure we'll be lectured by members of the government a little bit later on, about why we're debating this bill in spite of the fact that we support it. But it's because we are standing here representing our constituents and making sure that their voice is heard in this Legislature, which was the job that we were fortunate enough to obtain in the elections in 2011, and some of us a lot longer than that. Right, member from Durham? We want to make sure that we get the pieces of legislation right, and there will be some changes from time to time. We all spend time listening to residents in our ridings, and we want to bring those changes back here to Queen's Park.

I know that I received a phone call just a couple of weeks ago from a member of my Canadian Cancer Society administrative team in the Belleville area, Amy Doyle. She's a wonderful lady that I had the opportunity to work with at Quinte Broadcasting for a short time a few years ago. She's in charge of promotion for the Canadian Cancer Society and running many of the programs that the Canadian Cancer Society provides, raising funds in the community, and they're doing a fabulous job. We have members from the Canadian Cancer Society and many other agencies that are supporting people in a time of need, in the Legislature talking to us on a regular basis. They want to ensure that this piece of legislation actually gets passed. I can tell you that, when I was talking with Amy—and I look forward to participating in a fundraising and awareness event called Pedal For Hope, which is a Canadian Cancer Society initiative. I hope to be there in the riding to participate in that fundraising and awareness activity in the next few days.

We've heard from not just Amy, who's with the Canadian Cancer Society, but from family members who are dealing with cancer. Bill 21 has received, of course, the endorsement of the Canadian Cancer Society, and I understand why they would, because it makes a lot of sense. We have so many people in our province, in our country and in the world dealing with cancer that there needs to be supports in place.

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A lot of the burden, though, is being placed on the doorstep of the federal government to provide the services. All of the money from this is coming from the federal government. There's nothing really here from the Ontario government, except ensuring that the caregiver will have their job after they take care of the individual in question.

There are many stories, and I know we all get them: family members taking time off, and, as has been alluded to many times here in the Legislature, those family members who are taking time off aren't getting any financial support from the province. They are able to take the time off and look after their family member, which is fantastic.

I get dozens and dozens of calls from residents in my riding who are on fixed incomes, and many of them are seniors or they're on some kind of a support program—which in many cases is from the provincial government—and they are being nickelled and dimed at every turn. We just heard a petition read by the member from Leeds–Grenville. Whether it's for the materials that they need for their ostomies or in a diabetic situation—they're dealing with a lack of funding for diabetic test strips. Many other programs that used to provide financial support are being cut as a result of the actions of this government, not to mention the rising cost of electricity and the impact that that is having on family members, and the impact that that is having on our business people as well.

What also has been happening in my local area of Prince Edward and Hastings counties is that we have seen a lot of supports that are intended to be there for people in the community that simply don't exist yet. So the CCACs, the community care access centres, just a few short months ago actually sent out a notice saying that they were no longer going to be able to provide daily service to those who needed that daily health care attention in their home. They were no longer going to get that, and it's because of the actions of this current government. They were advising those who need help in their home that they weren't going to be able to get it.

Meanwhile, the province is continuously running up huge deficits and huge debt, but they're telling the CCACs that they have to live within their means, which, of course, is a noble message if it comes from a messenger that is operating in the same manner.

I can also tell you that there is a huge increase coming in the number of seniors that we have. A decade from now we'll have 43% more senior citizens in Ontario who will require care. Long-term-care beds simply haven't kept up, and there is a huge backlog in Hastings county, in my community, of long-term-care facilities. Really, there haven't been any additional long-term-care facilities.

I want to mention the good work that is happening at the hospices across my region. They are providing incredible care to families at a very important time in their lives, when they are about to lose a loved one. Only one of them is actually receiving funding from the LHIN, and

that is Prince Edward county. This is for a residential hospice, I should say, and it's only on a pilot project.

So there are many families out there, as I mentioned, who need this bill to be in place. Some of the issues that we discussed previously have been altered, as I mentioned earlier, in Bill 21, but there are still improvements that could be made. What we needed to do, actually—and there are still concerns, I should say, that need to be heard from, and these are our small business people. We have concerns about how they are going to be able to implement this type of a program when it becomes put in place. I had considerable concerns with the potential impact that this bill is going to have on small businesses.

At the end of the day, though, as I mentioned, there are many, many families across my riding and many others who are looking forward to this bill passing. I know we have heard from many members of the Legislature about this. These are the kinds of things that I believe we should be looking at to ensure that we have the assistance there for families when they need it most. Making sure that we get our economy started again, though, would also be a good message to take to people across the province, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues here in the Legislature more about Bill 21 as the afternoon progresses.

The Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families): We'll be supporting this bill at third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's so good to hear the member from Prince Edward-Hastings as he talks about his concerns for seniors. I'm happy to hear that, because every time the Tories are in opposition, they sound so human. It's really important to hear that and to see that.

He's concerned about seniors, of course, which is admirable, concerned about the fact that there is a long-term-care backlog in his riding. That suggests that, should he form government with his colleagues, he is going to take care of that somehow. We don't know how, quite yet, but he and his colleagues are going to be looking at the backlog in a way that will be good for senior citizens.

He noted we're going to have more and more senior citizens. As you know and he knows and many of the women MPPs in the Conservative caucus know, a lot of the seniors are women, and they're not very wealthy; you know that, I imagine. How we help them as they age is going to be tricky.

But when I hear the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, it warms me up a little bit to know that I am in good hands. As I get older, I know that, should they form government, he has got my concerns right in front of his hands and his heart. I need to hear those things, because, I got to tell you, I get worried. Some of us are getting older.

So I want to hear more and more Conservative members talk about how much they worry about seniors and what they are going to have in place to help them out, or

to help us out as we get there. Congratulations on that nice speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 21, which is the Leaves to Help Families Act. I was very heartened to hear the member from Prince Edward-Hastings say that when we get around to voting on this bill, in fact he and the other members of his party will be supporting the bill. I'm quite pleased to hear that. In fact, I think what I've heard members from all three parties say is that they look forward to supporting this act.

I would like to note that we are actually at third reading, which means that it's too late for all the marvelous suggestions about how we might amend the act. It has already been through second reading and out at committee.

What is interesting is that we have now been debating this bill for a total of 13 hours. Nine of those hours have been post-committee at third reading. In fact, let me amend that. I think we have actually spent a total of 22 hours: nine hours at third reading and 13 hours at second reading—anyway, extensive debate on this bill; 75 different members have spoken.

May I suggest that it isn't "When we get around to voting on this bill, I'll support it." It is "We need to get voting on this bill so we can get around to passing it." Twenty-two hours is enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege to listen to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, Mr. Smith. He talked about respect for his community, and he wanted their voices to be heard. He talked about people who work voluntarily for various organizations. Specifically, he mentioned Cancer Care Ontario. I think all of us members on this side continue to speak, advocating on behalf of a better understanding of what the government's actually doing with the bill.

I do want to put on the record two points particularly, in response to my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings.

For the last few days, I've been presenting two types of petitions. One is for the access for people with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. I have asked the minister personally to approve, under the recommendations of all of the experts dealing with respiratory ailments, and have asked the Minister of Health to look at the funding more seriously of Esbriet, the drug that gives these people—otherwise, they die because they are waiting for a lung transplant. The medical experts, not politicians, have said this drug is worth requiring.

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Another issue that I have been advocating—I read a petition today on improving post-stroke physiotherapy eligibility. Recently, this government cancelled the way they were funding physiotherapy and changed to a new model. What they've done is they have eliminated access

to physiotherapy, which is absolutely required for a recovery post-stroke.

One of my constituents will be here next week to speak directly to the minister. He's a 50-some-year-old gentleman who's an engineer from Queen's and who was a consultant. He had a stroke when he was in his 50s. He's no longer eligible for access to OHIP-funded physiotherapy. That is absolutely shameful. This gentleman has given his life and his profession. This is one more example of why there has to be more voices put to the discussion on Bill 21.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm pleased that the opposition is in support of this bill. Obviously, we have said before that we believe this bill should go forward. I had an opportunity in the last two weeks to talk to a constituent of mine, a young man with multiple sclerosis, an ambassador for MS, who came to see me because, in fact, he needs this kind of bill to go forward.

We've spoken about the weaknesses of the bill, and as we go through debate this afternoon we'll talk about what we see as the limitations before us, but he was very clear with me that even with limitations this is a bill that he wanted to come forward, have a vote and be put into place.

For those who have been struck with a debilitating long-term or life-threatening disease, whose lives are already facing huge challenges, who are dealing with tremendous psychological and mental stress, the idea that they would be able to get some support from their family members who would be able to take time off work without worrying that they'd lose their employment, the idea that they would get that support in the home that they desperately need is something that they really are reaching out for.

We have said before that this bill needs a lot of improvement, that there needs to be financial support for people, that there are difficulties that will be posed here for individuals, but as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina had to say, we think it's a good sign that the opposition is willing to move forward on this bill, as are we. We think it is promising that there is concern for seniors, those who are ill. We think it is positive that this Legislature has an opportunity to take a step, even if it is very small, to help people deal with profound illness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I'm pleased to return to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for his reply.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to those who have provided comments: the member from Trinity-Spadina and the member from Toronto-Danforth, as well as the Minister of Education and my friend the member from Durham.

Indeed, we do have a lot of seniors on the doorstep. We are going to see that population balloon significantly over the next 10 years, and we need to ensure that we have the resources in place to look after all of those

people. Unfortunately, with the mismanagement that we've seen from the current government, it has put every single health care program that we have in the province in jeopardy. That's just the honest-to-goodness truth. The costs have spiralled out of control, Mr. Speaker. But has the health care actually gotten any better? I think the answer is no. As a matter of fact, I know that the answer is no, and the supports aren't in place.

So this is a nice gesture and it's a nice baby step, I guess you could say—or a small step, as the member from Toronto-Danforth put it—in looking after this one situation, but I can tell you that people in my community are having their home care cut back right now. They're in need of having people come to their home and provide the health care services in their home. I can tell you, because I used to work in a long-term-care facility before I got into broadcasting a few years ago, that on a wing of 32 people at that time, there might have been three or four who had severe cases of dementia, out of the 32. I can tell you now that 32 of 32 are dealing with severe dementia. Have the staffing levels gone up? No. We're dealing with the same number of staff.

The health care system in Ontario is in a mess. We support this bill. It is a small step, but we can do so much better if we get our fiscal house in order, something that this government has been unable to do over the last 10 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have the opportunity to speak to this bill again, I think. If I recall what I said in the past with what I'm about to say, this is not a revolutionary bill. This is a modest little bill that will help some people, and I say God bless, because at least it does something, which is always better than nothing.

What does it do? The bill provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. What this means is that we are passing our obligation as government on to individuals and to families to take care of their own. That's all this bill does. We have shifted our responsibility as government and we have passed it on to the non-profit sector to do the job. We've passed it on to churches, synagogues and mosques; we have passed it on to volunteers; and we're passing it on to family members to take care of their own. If they have the money, great; if they don't have the money, "Too bad, so sad" is the new reality in this province of ours and in this country of ours.

I do not see it as a pretty future at all. What we are seeing, more and more, is income insecurity, income instability and income inequality, which is providing a great deal of stress to individuals and to families, unlike what I have ever seen before.

In the 1960s, people at least—their income was not great in the early 1960s, but throughout the 1960s and the 1970s incomes were going up. They were able to buy homes in a couple of years, or at least three, four or five. Today, you can't afford a home. Today, you can't even

afford to pay rent in the city of Toronto with the incomes that you earn. More and more people are working part-time. More and more people are working on a contract, especially in the public sector.

I often refer to colleges and universities as a sector where people used to work full-time, and now more and more of those college professors are on contract; so too with our university professors—on contract. Why? Because they don't get the funding from our government to be able to provide full-time support and full-time teaching jobs for the people who serve our colleges and universities.

More and more people are working part-time, which means that they don't have the income to take care of themselves. Some 70% of our people do not have a private pension. Many of our seniors, who are women, are poor. That's why you often hear me say in this House that I don't want to be a senior citizen, and I rage against it each and every day because I don't want to find myself a senior citizen in this province, where, if we don't continue working to have the money to be able to provide for some support, it means we are on our own, having to find family members to take care of us.

When people do not have the income, we are left with a bill that says that you can have up to eight weeks to go and take care of your own. That assumes that the employer knows about this law, that the employee knows about this law and that the employee will not be afraid of employer repercussions should he or she say to the employer, "By the way, the law allows me to do that," should he or she have the power or the confidence to be able to say to the employer, "I have, by law, up to eight weeks to take care of one of my family members." You understand that that power relationship with the employer is a very, very subtle and fragile one. Very few employees have the power and confidence to say to the employer, "The law allows me to take eight weeks"—of course, a leave without pay.

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We're saying to people who are financially insecure, "You have, by law, the power to take up to eight weeks to take care of one of your own." Thanks very much, government. You are so kind. God bless that you are so good to me that you allow the employer to give me up to eight weeks so that I can take care of my own, assuming I have the income—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's a great thing.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I know. It's a great thing, isn't it? Isn't it great that someone who earns \$18,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 is given the freedom—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Seniors calling you.

Interruption.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. But you good members are so eager to listen to me, you don't hear the sound of this phone. And maybe you want to hear my phone more than you want to hear me—very likely.

But so good and so kind you are as a government that you will allow people who earn \$30,000 a year to be able

to take eight weeks to take care of their own. You are too kind. You Liberals are just too kind.

That's the nature of the Liberal Party. They pass these little bills that they claim to be revolutionary, and they do so little—so little—especially for those who are low-income.

If I make \$70,000, \$80,000, \$100,000 and I ask my employer, "I need eight weeks," it's not so bad. I can probably handle a leave of eight weeks, unpaid, if I'm earning \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000, \$100,000, \$150,000, \$200,000. You know that the ones who are going to take advantage of this are the ones, of course, who are making the good bucks. These are the people who are going to take advantage of it, because the poor folks are going to be so stressed out by not having enough money and so stressed out that they have to take care of one of their own that they won't know what to do.

So we want to thank the Liberal government for their kindness—magnanimity—and that they continue to give so much to working people such as these kinds of bills.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Rosie, where would we be without you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We embrace ever so fondly, you Liberals and we New Democrats.

This doesn't do very much. I often love the opportunity to say this because this is so typical of what Liberal bills are always all about. They do little, as always, and they proclaim it as a big, big thing for people.

I often talk about home care as a serious, serious problem. I often talk about my experience, and my father, who had Alzheimer's. If it were not for my mother, who took care of my father for seven painful long years, what would we have done? It was through the sacrifice of a mother to take care of her husband that we got through that. But how many people today have the strength to do that, to take care of their own, as my mother did? There aren't that many people. There aren't that many people today who can do that, and financially there aren't too many people who can take on that responsibility.

The shifting away of government responsibility and obligation to individual members is, to me, the worst thing that has happened to us in this decade. It used to be that we had a great socialized system that used to take care of our seniors and used to take care of those on low income—not anymore. So people struggle on their own to find a way to survive.

While organizations such as the Alzheimer Society argue that this bill is a small step and, indeed, in their view, a positive step, they argue that other measures should be taken to support people further. They suggested a non-refundable tax credit as a way of easing their burden. They talked about flexible respite as a way of supporting people.

By the way, my mother looked for respite care in many, many institutions in our area, and they didn't like to provide respite care where I took my father because they finally said, "It's too much of a burden for us to take him up to the second floor and bring him down to the first floor each and every day." They suggested that the

best solution was for my father to be institutionalized. We need respite care, and we need it everywhere across Ontario. A non-refundable tax credit would certainly help struggling families who are finding it very, very difficult to take care of their own. This bill is a tiny little step, and it's hardly revolutionary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise today on Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act. I think what I'm hearing from the opposition parties is that they agree we should move forward on this. There is a variety of other words that go along with that, but I think, even if it's a small step, it's a step that should be taken. In my opinion, it's a larger step than others are saying that it is. Certainly, I think we all agree that it's a positive step.

There have been a number of representatives along the way from the Ontario Caregiver Coalition who have helped us to get to this point and, I'm sure, have advised all three parties in this House. We've heard from the Alzheimer Society, from the MS Society, the Cancer Society, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation amongst others, who have told us we should do this, that this is a good thing to do. It's going to make our society a better place.

Some of the people who have been telling us to do this—Florentina Stancu-Soare, who is with us today; Dr. David Daglish; Janet Daglish; Joanne Bertrand; Abidah Lalani; Jean Ann Lowry; Delia Sinclair Frigault; and Cristin Napier, amongst others—are people who have come forward, given us their best advice and told us that this would be a positive step forward, especially this afternoon, Speaker, if this was allowed to move forward to a vote. I would ask the House to allow that to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I was listening closely to what the member from Trinity-Spadina was saying, specifically when he said that this has shifted care on to non-profits. We only have to look at our history books and see that government was mostly in charge of security: armies and things like that. They weren't in the business of education. They weren't in the business of health care. It was non-profits that did these things.

The whole reason government grew and really ballooned to the state that we're in now is because it was decided by the people—it was decided democratically—that we should have government take care of things, because these non-profits often don't cover everything. They have their own agenda, and they can be very limiting. There were a lot of people who fell through the cracks and didn't get the care that they needed. That was government's job, and taxes were implemented to pay for those services.

What we have now is a situation where people are paying the taxes, paying for the services, and not getting the services. That's the real crux of the matter that I think needs to be addressed. People wouldn't mind if they

didn't pay personal income tax, gas tax, municipal tax and on and on—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Carbon tax.

Mrs. Gila Martow: —right, whatever taxes you're paying, sales tax—if people didn't have to pay all these taxes, and then they had to pay for the care of their seniors or for their health care or for educating their children. It should be one or the other. It should not be a situation where people are paying for the services, paying such high taxes, and receiving so little. Things are being removed from OHIP. Every year, people feel that something is removed without anything else being added.

Thank you for letting me make my comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Again, it's an honour to stand in this House on behalf of my constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh, and especially to stand today and to speak to the comments freshly made by the member from Trinity-Spadina.

The member speaks with so much passion. Every time he stands in this House, all the parties are riveted as to what the member is going to say. He has a wealth of experience, a breadth of knowledge. He speaks from the heart, and he speaks to the people.

I know the people at home watching on television this afternoon would never even dream of changing the channel when the member from Trinity-Spadina is on his feet in this House, because he speaks to them. He makes them think, and he should be making all of us think, with the points that he raises about the state of the health care system in our province and where we're headed.

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This bill, as he said, is a great step and a small step, but it's in the right direction, because there is so much more that could be done to improve our health care system.

Hon. John Gerretsen: So let's vote on it.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I think we should move on it this afternoon, and after I give you 10 minutes of my thoughts on it, I'll be prepared to give you that. But at the moment, I'd like to speak to the member from Trinity-Spadina. I thought he was great. I am ready to move, but I'd like to have my comments later on as well.

I think it's important for all of us, when we speak about democracy—the reason people send us here, Speaker, is for us to bring the voice from our communities to this location, to this Legislature, to this great provincial Parliament, and we all have one voice when we leave here.

I just want to comment and commend the member from Trinity-Spadina for making us think this afternoon about what more we could be doing with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh on the presentation from my good friend and colleague from Trinity-Spadina. Talk about animated, Speaker: Sometimes he is

so animated, we worry that in the flapping of his arms, he might actually take off. And we were missing his trademark word as he talked about costs. I was waiting for the pecunia, but it never actually occurred.

We've debated this bill now for 13 hours during second reading and nine hours at third reading, for a total of 22 hours. Seventy-five members of the Legislature have spoken. I'm not sure that there's a great deal left to be said, and I think we should just vote and get this bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now go back to the member for Trinity-Spadina for his reply.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks to all the MPPs who have spoken. Of course, I want to listen to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh as well, because he has a lot to say.

I have to admit that some changes were made that were positive, and that's part of the debate. It's part of listening to the opposition, I think, so that it makes for better bills.

Two changes have been added as to allow not just physicians to determine whether the condition of the family member is serious in the meaning of the act, but also to allow nurses to make that determination, which I think is very helpful and good, because in some provinces, we don't have that many physicians close by, so a nurse might be the only person that is available. That was a good thing.

Providing for flexibility is equally good. Instead of a four-week chunk of time, a person might only need half a day or a day, so providing for that flexibility was also useful. That's part of the debate, I think. It's part of listening to the opposition in determining that there are some things that we've said that, hopefully, you like and then we make changes. All of that is very, very useful.

I have to say to the member from Thornhill that while she agrees with me about the government's responsibility to take care of people—because I think that's important—I am not sure that I agree with the whole idea of yes to government supporting seniors but no to the idea of not paying income taxes or property taxes and so on. That is, in my view, an extreme position that is difficult to support because, as we all know, we raise \$52 billion for our health care system. That's indeed a whole lot of money. I wish we spent more of it on prevention. But it's hard to take that money away.

Speaker, I thank all the members for their contribution to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to rise today to offer my points on Bill 21. I think I need to start off—I'd be absolutely remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't say we're glad the Liberals finally listened to us. As a result, they amended and made some changes to improve their original bill. As a result, we're here today debating Bill 21.

This legislation—we recognize its merit and this is why we're supporting it. This legislation actually elimin-

ates inconsistencies between the federal labour code and our provincial labour laws, instead of creating more bureaucracy and mayhem and inconsistencies. We're actually looking at a bill, Bill 21, that is harmonizing the similar changes that the federal government has made to the Canada Labour Code. And to that we feel good and actually thank the Liberal Party for listening to us, because we do have our feet on the ground. We're the party with a plan. Not only are we focused on a million jobs that this economy in Ontario so badly needs, but we're also focused on getting health care right in Ontario as well.

Bill 21 reads "An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence." We recognize that it does a number of things. In terms of flexibility, it's introducing a proposal for family caregivers to leave up to eight unpaid weeks per year to care for a loved one. To qualify for that leave, the employee must be caring for an individual whom a physician has deemed to have a critical injury or illness and cannot care for themselves. The leave will also mirror the family medical leave significantly, except it will not include the provision of significant risk of death within a 26-week period. It also introduces a critically ill child care leave and unpaid job-protected leave for up to 37 weeks for parents caring for a critically ill child. It also introduces a crime-related child death or disappearance leave, an unpaid job-protected leave of up to 104 weeks for an employee whose child dies, if it is probably the result of a crime, or up to 52 weeks for an employee who has a person disappear, if it's probably the result of a crime.

I can't help but think of families that have experienced that type of loss and would benefit and appreciate that so much. But when we're talking about giving health care, I find it interesting that the member from Trinity-Spadina talked about and referenced the people who are financially insecure, and at a time when we're sensitive to that. The member is very correct. There are many people in Ontario that are financially insecure right now, and this government of the day—albeit they're trying to make a small step with Bill 21—is turning an absolute blind eye to what really matters. People cannot afford to live in a Liberal Ontario any longer.

Just a week or more ago, we understand, from one of their own agencies, the Ontario Energy Board, as of May 1—guess what?—electricity rates are going up again. I bring this up because there are so many little band-aid initiatives that just are nothing more than smoke and mirrors in terms of announcements that were made over this last week, when the fact of the matter is that OEB has referenced specifically—

Hon. John Gerretsen: So what did you do? More wind power. More solar power. That's what we need.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We're hearing from the member opposite, "We need more wind and more solar." Well, guess what? OEB actually has said the reason for

their electricity rate going up on May 1 is renewable energy. And you know what? When you check—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Huron-Bruce. I think it's important for the Speaker to point out that the comments need to be relevant to the debate.

I would return to the member for Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I raise the concern over the rising rates on May 1 that OEB has attributed to renewables, because when we're talking about people being cared for in their homes, I think of people who are on conservers or they need a particular air conditioner going. People are, at the Liberals' recommendation and encouragement, to age at home, yet to age at home you need a variety of devices, and those devices are going to use more and more energy. I'm speaking on this from personal experience, and no one dare heckle or try to refute what I'm about to say. If you have a conserver in your home, your energy rates go up. If you have to be permanently on oxygen, your energy rates go up. And what is this Liberal government doing? Turning an absolute blind eye. They're using energy as a social policy and ideology as opposed to an economic pillar.

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To go back to what the member from Trinity-Spadina said, people are financially insecure. These very folks who we're talking about supporting, in terms of leaves to care for their loved ones in their final chapters, are going to incur a lot more expense because of the mismanagement we've incurred through this government and this decade of despair.

With regards to aging at home, I find it interesting that my colleague from Vaughan was very, very astute to recognize what the role of government should be.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: From Vaughan. You're always very astute. Yes, and I look forward to hearing from you tomorrow.

But my colleague behind me here, she was very, very astute to also share that the role of government has lost its way. Once upon a time non-profits, as she noted—the member from Trinity-Spadina was noting not-for-profits took care of their own.

It made me think about a meeting I was at last Tuesday in Seaforth hospital; it was a great evening. The room was jam-packed as people celebrated the efforts of the Huron Hospice Volunteer Service. They recognized that they need to do more because this Liberal government isn't. They are trying to fill a gap. As a result, they kicked off a strategic plan to recognize the growing needs of the local palliative care population in Huron county.

There are so many more people who are standing up and telling this Liberal government, "Enough. We've got to get our priorities straight."

I think of Barbara, just a couple weeks ago, in this very hallowed hall. She was here representing a group of people who are looking at advocating for an expanded

use of Esbriet in Ontario. Barbara's up against the wall. She may be facing a double lung transplant, but it's about quality of life in her final days. We don't have a government right now, I'm afraid, that is tuned in, connecting the dots and listening to the people who are living examples of why we need to do better.

Bill 21, while we talk about leaves for caregivers, is very, very admirable and it's on the right track. As I said before, I'm glad the Liberal government finally listened to us and made some astute changes upon our recommendation and reintroduced this initiative under Bill 21. We would be remiss if we didn't point out the fact that this Liberal government continues to not connect the dots and they're missing the mark.

Not too long ago in my riding I had a wonderful person contact me. They were concerned. Their husband suffers from dementia. They contacted CCAC. They want to care for their husband at home. Guess what kind of support they're getting? The CCAC offered 45 minutes a week. All she could do was just hang up the phone and roll her eyes and in despair contact our office and say, "Really? Is this what our government of the day can offer us?" She's so frustrated with the mismanagement of funds that are going anywhere but our front lines.

I found it very interesting over the weekend, when the news broke out in the London area, in the London Free Press, about the \$40 million that was to be specifically targeted for training for nurses. All of a sudden, there have not been a lot of nurses trained. It turns out that it's probably another slush fund. It's totally, totally unacceptable.

This government is out of gas. It's out of time. People are standing up and calling them accountable for their antics and their self-induced arrogance that thinks that taxpayers could just stand by and award tax dollar after tax dollar so that they could do their bidding. It's so frustrating because we need to do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The member spoke about this bill, and spoke, I would say, even more about energy policy. I want to just address the bill briefly and I think my colleagues may have other comments as we go along.

As you are well aware, Speaker, the bill provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. As many have said in this chamber previously, this is a very small step. It's positive, but frankly, we think there's going to be low uptake unless the federal government changes employment insurance regulations so caregivers who take advantage of the leave actually have access to an income that will allow them to stay away from their employment for any length of time.

Most employees don't understand their rights under the Employment Standards Act. The government of Ontario, when and if this bill is passed and put into law, needs to inform the public that in fact the law exists, that there's an opportunity for them to take this leave, and

frankly, they need to know that employers can't take reprisals against employees for taking this leave.

Right now, everyone who would be covered under the Employment Standards Act would have the right under this act to take leave. As I've said, it's not a bad step, but a very small step, given the difficulty many people would have in missing one, two, three or four paycheques. That poses huge difficulties for people to give the care at home that family members need and, frankly, deserve.

There wouldn't be a requirement that an employee be employed for a particular length of time with an employer. That's a positive angle.

Speaker, when it's my opportunity to speak again, I will enlarge on these comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I don't want to say it's a pleasure to rise today to speak again to Bill 21. Let's go back and take a look at the facts. We all agree it's something we can do for families. It's an important step. We've all agreed on that. We debated it, I think, for 13 hours here in the House, for second reading. It went to committee: We heard from stakeholders. We had a great public consultation session. We amended the bill. We all agreed to move the bill forward to this Legislature, and now we're in our 10th hour of debate—10 hours.

This is a bill that's important to families, to people who have a loved one they need to support. It helps them to protect their jobs. It's not something we should continue to debate. The message we are sending by continuing to debate, with an exclamation mark, is that we don't want to get things done in this House. It's not that we don't agree on this bill, but we're not agreeing on this bill because we don't want to bring forward another bill. In my books, that is absolutely wrong.

I think people send us here to get things done. We have an opportunity to do that now, and we should be moving forward and getting this piece of legislation passed so that families are supported and their jobs are protected when they have a serious situation in front of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I just have a diligence to remind the people listening at home and those in the House that that party there controls the agenda. Their leader prorogued government. Most of the bills that we're debating now could have been in two and a half years ago. Four months, Mr. Speaker, they prorogued.

Dalton McGuinty prorogued Parliament, Mr. Speaker. We aren't the problem here, so we shouldn't be getting these little prayers and speeches to us. This is a bit sanctimonious from that government who has prorogued.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Now that I've made that point very clear for the people at home, we're doing our due dili-

gence. We're representing the needs of our constituents as we need to.

It's my pleasure, absolutely, to rise on behalf of my colleague and neighbour from Huron—Bruce. She's one of the most conscientious, caring members of this assembly. Every day she focuses on the people in her riding. She puts the needs of the people first, and she comes to this House every day to do that. I'm proud to stand beside her, arm in arm, on this bill especially.

We did bring some changes, some much-needed changes and amendments, to this bill because, like a lot of bills that the Liberals have done, they brought them without stakeholder consultation. They've rushed them to this assembly, trying to steamroll, employing—to be honest, the whole thing beyond us. We really need time to slow some of this down and make sure we're doing it right before we enact it and have to fix it, which is what we've had to do with lots of the legislation they've brought here.

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I think that what we brought as another practical piece that was fair to both the employer and the employee, one of the key ones, was a time allocation. Not everyone gets sick in a consecutive week, so we brought that in and said they should be able to use it when they need it, when the person at home needs the care, so that we have that ability to have the leave—not just consecutive weeks, because, again, they had an ideal coming out of them.

I think the last point she raised was that it is time enough. They've doubled the debt. There are 600,000 people out of work. Mr. Speaker, we just can't afford more of a deficit from this government.

We're looking forward to this bill being enacted and we will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was listening to my colleague across, and he talked about: 13 hours; it went to committee; amendments to the bill; 10 hours of debate; important to families; not to continue to debate.

I've been here all afternoon. If you want to put a motion forward, maybe we can see what happens there. Put a motion forward and see if we can move it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. I return to the member for Huron—Bruce for her reply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly appreciate everybody's perspective, and it's their right to share comments based on my concerns and reflections on Bill 21.

I appreciate that the member from Toronto—Danforth found that I spoke on energy. You can't talk about caring for people in their homes or in a hospice or in respite without recognizing that that cost, under the Liberal watch, is going through the roof. Enough is enough.

The member from Ottawa South talked about how it's important to look at the facts. Well, do you know what? Not only do we have to protect people and their jobs—he talked about that very instance—but I would also suggest that we have to take it further and we need to be talking

about protecting pocketbooks. Again, life has become totally unaffordable because of the direction this Liberal government has taken.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, my neighbour and friend. He was very astute in recognizing that it's our right to stand up and debate. Perhaps the member from Ottawa South does not recall prorogation because he was working at 180 Elgin Street at the time—and we all know the significance of 180 Elgin Street, people who have been paying attention to the gas plants.

The member from Niagara Falls says that we need to get on with business. It is all very important—because we have had enough of the hoodwinking. We've had enough of their arrogance. We've had enough of smoke-screens.

Bill 21 is a small step, and we have to do so much better for the folks from Ontario. We need affordability, we need jobs and we need to have a climate that enables people to care for their loved ones at home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act.

Speaker, if I may, to the Minister of Labour: Thank you, Minister, for the ribbons for the day of mourning this afternoon, recognizing the people whose lives have been forever changed by workplace injury, illness or fatality.

I would have much preferred to be in Windsor this afternoon. We have an annual ceremony there at 5 o'clock, and then we go down to the riverfront, to the Peace Fountain, and lay flowers in memory of those who have been killed or injured on the job. My best wishes go out to those who will be taking part in that ceremony this afternoon. I normally attend. This will be the first one I've missed in several years. As a councillor, I always seized the opportunity to be there.

This bill provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. I'm happy to see the bill come to the House on the third reading. I think so much has been said about it, but it's always good to remind people, especially those at home, just what we're talking about here.

I remember reading the notes when the former Minister of Labour first introduced the bill. He said, "Our government recognizes the challenges that hard-working Ontarians face when they must provide care for a loved one while also working full-time, and we," meaning the Liberal government, "believe that the last thing Ontarians should worry about when the health of their loved one hangs in the balance is the stress of work or the fear of losing their job. That's why our government already provides Ontarians with a personal emergency leave for up to 10 days or a family medical leave for up to eight weeks to care for a family member at risk of death.

"But we know that there is a gap for those hard-working Ontarians who are increasingly caring for their elderly family members with a chronic acute medical condition, not to mention other family members facing serious illnesses that do not necessarily pose a risk of death."

So the bill gets tabled, the family caregiver leave, and it amends the Employment Standards Act. The Ontario Liberals prorogued the Legislature for their own reasons, and that's why we're here today. Although we keep hearing from members opposite that people on this side of the House should sit down and be quiet, we wouldn't be here today speaking to this; this would have been handled some months ago.

I sometimes get the feeling, when we debate in the House and the government says we've had enough debate—so many hours, so many speakers—it's like when you go to a concert and people are lined up to get a ticket to get in. Of course, the Liberals are always first in line, and so they get in. They get a ticket to get in. Then they say, "Let's close the door and start the concert." Well, what about the rest of us, who want the opportunity to either get in and listen to the band or the entertainment, or to have a say in what's going on? I'm still in line. Thank you.

There are several things in this bill that we could be talking about this afternoon. I'm happy that the government has finally realized that family members require a bit more flexibility in this day and age to support the ones they love the most. I remember listening to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings earlier today, and he talked about the hospice in his riding. It reminded me, as the member from Windsor West would know well, of the hospice village that we have in Windsor, one of the first in the province, and the wonderful services they provide to our community.

I often think, when I read the obituaries in the newspapers on a regular basis, that more and more these days, we're hearing about people who have passed away quietly at home, or peacefully at home, surrounded by their loved ones. Although we have a great hospice, we can't always get in there—I mean, there's only so much room—so people these days are deciding they'd much rather pass away at home, in familiar surroundings, surrounded by the ones they love.

It makes you think the need for this bill is even more so, because it doesn't happen overnight. You are actually attending to the person in their final hours. It may take weeks; it may take days; it may take months. But the loved ones are gathered, and it gives us a great opportunity to say our final farewells and, as you know, to say, "I love you, Dad. I'm going to miss you. Thank you for everything." That's part of this bill. That's part of the makeup of this bill as well.

The scary thing, I guess, is that we know the Ontario demographic is shifting, and that's not a disputed fact at all. Information about the Ontario population projections, based on Canada census data, tells us that the number of seniors aged 65 and over in Ontario is projected to more

than double from two million, or 14.6% of the population, in 2012 to almost 4.2 million, or 24%, by 2036. That says that the growth in the share and number of seniors will accelerate from the 2012 to 2031 period as the baby boomers turn 65, as I have done.

We have an aging population, simple as that, and it requires more folks to need more care and attention than ever before, and that need will continue to grow. I don't think anybody will dispute that. We know that this will put significant pressure on our health care system and on our families, who require that flexibility to take care of family members in their ill health at that time of need. I make no bones about it. I'm part of that aging demographic, and it would be comforting to know that my children would have the ability to take the time off work to care for my needs. But, Speaker, let's hope I don't require their services any time soon for that specific purpose.

1520

I know that in our NDP caucus meetings, we have had much discussion on this topic, and I know that my colleagues spoke up at committee on this bill as well. We know that having time off is critical for those who are in a difficult situation, and we need to take that time off: time off in the form of a protected leave of absence, so individuals can provide care and support to family members who have serious medical conditions. But I question the enforcement of this bill. Probably the biggest obstacle to employees taking advantage of this leave is a fear that an employer could take some form of reprisal. I certainly hope that's not the case. I seriously hope the government addresses this concern. That would defeat the purpose of the amendment. Most employees don't understand their rights under the Employment Standards Act, and the government must ensure that Ontario workers know more about the leave and that there are no employer reprisals for employees wishing to take the leave. That's my biggest fear.

We know that there's a number of other leaves granted under the Ontario Employment Standards Act, and we must not get this new caregiver leave confused with the family medical leave. The family medical leave provides for up to eight weeks to provide care to a family member who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within 26 weeks, and since 2004 there's been employment insurance support for that leave. We know things are tight right now. People are getting squeezed at their wallets or their purses, and people are living paycheque to paycheque in many cases these days. The province seems to be involved in scandal after scandal, and yet we hear about the latest revelations, as we talked about all morning, on the Herb Gray Parkway.

So we need the government to get some things right, and I think it's that time. This bill is going to do some of that. It's too bad, though, that we don't see an enhanced type of income support mechanism with this leave, like we do with the family medical leave. There's no employment insurance support for this leave, but I did hear about

the province talking to the feds about possible EI support, and that is certainly a great step in the right direction. I certainly support that. The Liberal government must push the federal government hard to change EI so that there is some form of income support for those taking this leave. Let's hope those discussions are ongoing and that we do see some action. Let's turn our minds to a perfect example of increased care required by our families.

I have more to say. Maybe I'll get into that further on. I want to talk about the Alzheimer's Society and all the special needs that they have coming up with an aging population. Thank you for your time and your attention this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to respond to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh and just say that it was good to hear many of the comments that were positive about this legislation. We've heard that in the House from all three parties, together with some criticism thrown in on other subjects from time to time. I believe 78 members have spoken on this for a total of 23 hours, and it seems to have good support, so I think it's time to call on the opposition to quit delaying this bill. Let's stop the stalling and let's pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is a privilege to stand before this privileged Legislature and to talk about Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act. I listened to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, and you can tell, just by listening to the tone of his voice and so on, that he's a compassionate man. Of course, we are going to be supporting this bill as a caucus.

The points that he made were very, very strong as far as I was concerned. It's a small step, though. This is a very small step, but I'm glad to see that the Liberal government has, in fact, been listening to comments of the opposition.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We listen all the time. Every day we listen.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Hearing is one thing; listening is something totally different, to the minister without portfolio.

However, again, when we talk about Bill 21, I like the fact that family caregivers will get up to eight weeks of unpaid leave per year, and I think that's good for them. Also, I see it as two-sided, because not only is it helpful for those who can provide care to the individuals, but also I think there's a side note in there to help businesses as well. They obviously don't want to feel like they have to lose a good employee; they'll grant them up to eight weeks. There is a catch to this as well, and that is that physicians must have deemed it a critical injury or illness and the fact that the sick person cannot care for themselves.

As I said earlier, we will, in fact, support this bill, but it's unfortunate that the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty—McGuinty, sorry—prorogued this Legisla-

ture. When he did that, he wiped out all the bills that were, in fact, before this Legislature—costly to all taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the words from my colleague the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. He speaks about the need for this kind of care and the reality that a large percentage of this population is aging and is going to require these services. I know that the government likes to present itself as compassionate. I want to note that there is a very large sector of our public service, the managerial and professional services, AMAPCEO—you may know them—who are engaged in negotiations with the Liberals right now and who have been told they're going to have to live with substantial cuts to their health care benefits—substantial rollbacks.

We've been through this before; we saw it with teachers and education workers. When you don't deal with people on a respectful basis—everyone knows you have to be tough, but also everyone knows you have to be fair and respectful—then you demoralize a workforce.

Frankly, we're talking about a law here that will require public servants to deal with companies, to deal with employers, and to stand up for people who are going to be, I'm sure, at times, denied these benefits. They are going to want to go to those public servants, get their support, get them to advocate for them and get them to enforce the law. We can't, on one hand, say that we're going to look after people, and on the other hand say that we have to take it out on those who we actually expect to deliver the services, to protect the public and to enforce the law.

This small step is nothing that we object to. We're willing to see it go forward, but we also say that those who do that managerial and professional work, who make sure these laws get put in place and enforced, and those who give us advice so that we can actually govern in this province, deserve to be treated with respect and deserve to have negotiations that reflect the value of what they give to this province.

This bill may be compassionate; the way our senior civil servants are being treated is not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 21 by continuing to put up speakers. The bill has now been debated for 13 hours during second reading and 10 hours at third reading, for a total of 22 hours. Over 79 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. In listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill.

The opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 21 by putting up speaker after speaker. This signals that there's no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill and that their only goal is to delay. I'm

calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us pass this important piece of legislation.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That ends our questions and comments for this round. We return to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to the members from Ottawa—Orléans, Chatham—Kent—Essex, Toronto—Danforth and York Centre.

Just a quick comment to the member from York Centre: My colleague from Niagara Falls, a few minutes ago, asked the government to bring forth a motion so we could vote on this bill. He called your bluff, and you kept saying so many speakers, so much time. He asked you to put forth a motion so we could vote before I spoke. Nobody made a motion. If you want a motion, bring it forward. We'll vote on it. We'll get this done. Let's get it done.

Speaker, I ran out of time the last time. I want to talk about the Alzheimer Society, that Ontarians with dementia will require more complex care as the number of cases increases by 40% in the next 10 years. The responsibility of care falls largely on the shoulders of family members who will provide 144 million hours of unpaid care per year by 2020. We know that, today, Alzheimer disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians and that will continue to grow.

I have a petition in my community that has been circulating for a few weeks and the signatures keep pouring in. It speaks to creating, in Ontario, a provincial dementia plan. But just think about all the other diseases and illnesses that have an impact as well.

This bill deserves our support. Bring it forward. We will vote on it. We will be supporting it. But we also recognize that our greater medical community needs more support as well. I know our nurses—I met with our community care nurses—need support. Nurses across the system and personal support workers can really use our help. There are a lot of things in our health care system that need improving. This is a small step in the right direction.

As I say, we will be voting on it. We will be supporting it whenever the government brings forth the motion. Let's have it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to speak on this bill for a very short period of time because this bill is about only one thing, and that is compassion—compassion that we need to show to people in need, our family members who need the assistance of other family members. When you put it all together, that's really what this bill is all about.

Now, according to the count of the table and according to the highly efficient staff of the House leader's office, more than 80 members have spoken about this bill. Out of the 107 members here, 80 members have spoken about this bill. Each and every member has said they're going

to support the bill. So I am quite sure that the people out there in television land who may be watching this on an ongoing basis are probably saying to themselves, "How can it be that a bill that has been spoken to by 80 members, who have all taken the same position, that they support the bill"—Speaker, in all honesty, there aren't too many bills in this House that you can say the opposition agrees with, the Tory opposition agrees with and the third party, the New Democratic Party, agrees with. This is one of those bills that everybody agrees to because it speaks to compassion.

During the time that those 80 members have spoken, they've spoken for something like 13 to 14 hours on second reading and a further 11 hours or 10½ hours during third reading. That means, in total, about 24 hours. Think about this: One whole day of time has been taken up talking about a bill that we all agree to.

The bill has been supported by all sorts of good caregiving organizations in our community. The Ontario Caregiver Coalition agrees with the bill. The MS Society—and I know we've all done functions from time to time with the MS Society in our own communities. They support the bill. Parkinson Society Ontario supports the bill. The Alzheimer Society supports the bill. I just heard the member from Windsor—Tecumseh talk about how important it is to do something about the issue of dementia which is growing on an ongoing basis in our society from one generation to the next. They agree with this bill. The Canadian Cancer Society—and there are so many different wings to the cancer society—supports the bill. The ALS Society, the Ontario Home Care Association, the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada, the Saint Elizabeth organization—every good organization in this province agrees with this bill. It is about time that we finally put it to bed and that we all vote the same way so that this bill can be given royal assent and can be proclaimed as soon as possible so that the people of this province who need the support of this bill, who need to look after family members in their homes who need the help, can actually start implementing this bill, and so that the employers, in effect, can be subjected to the bill as well.

Speaker, as you know, the bill was introduced more than a year ago—March 5, 2013. That is a long, long time ago. The bill has had a tremendous amount of debate, as I've already talked about before.

What will the bill primarily do? It will help Ontarians provide care and support for family members with a very serious medical condition, for a critically ill child—and what better way to look after your child, when that child is critically ill, than for a parent or a close relative to actually take time off from work so that the child can be looked after properly, preferably in the home, but in some circumstances in a hospital setting where the child needs the help of that particular parent or caregiver. The bill will also allow that person to take some time to deal with the death and disappearance of one's child as a probable result of a crime. There can be no more horrify-

ing situation than that, when a child has either disappeared or has died as a result of a crime.

With all that being said, it's time that the bill passes third reading and becomes law today, or as soon as we pass it here and as soon as we can send it over to the Lieutenant Governor.

There are many other important bills that we should be discussing. Let's talk about Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act. I think everybody, every adult, will certainly agree with that—maybe not every youth that wants to smoke; let's hope there aren't that many of them. But certainly Bill 131 needs more debate, so we can do that once we pass this bill. How about Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act? That's another bill that we should be talking about. The Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161; or Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which will set in motion a definite scheme whereby annually, on a given date, the minimum wage in Ontario will increase, rather than doing it the way we have in the past, every four or five years.

Having said all of that and with all of the time that we've spent debating this piece of legislation, I move that this question now be put at this point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to recess the House for 10 minutes. This House is in recess.

The House recessed from 1538 to 1548.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): During the debate on Bill 21, this House has heard over 13 hours at second reading. Bill 21 has had full consideration at committee stage. We have now had over 10 hours at third reading. Given these statistics, I'm prepared to allow the motion.

Mr. Gerretsen has moved that the question now be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Mr. Naqvi has moved third reading of Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received from the chief government whip a notice of deferral asking that the vote be deferred on Bill 21 until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION
EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When this bill was last debated, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had the floor. Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to speak on Bill 161. As many of us are aware, Ontario was the number one destination for immigration in Canada. That is certainly no longer the case. I believe that immigrants believe that there are jobs. They may arrive here. They may believe that we're the destination and they want to be here, but unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they find out it's not so easy to find a job in Ontario. The streets aren't paved with gold, as they were told. They often head out west or to the Maritimes, where job growth is certainly happening with some of the manufacturing that seems to be leaving Ontario at a very alarming rate. It's not a joke that immigrants are coming here, and youth are graduating secondary schools, universities and colleges and unable to find meaningful work. In fact, adults who may leave the work force, either to take time off to be with their children or take care of their elderly parents—or just maybe their company has left the province—are not finding an easy time to find employment that's meaningful; and they have the job experience, so imagine how it is for youth or immigrants to find meaningful employment in Ontario.

There's no point talking about another government bureaucracy to aid immigrants before and after they arrive in Ontario, if we're not going to have the jobs in place for these future citizens of our province. This really is putting the proverbial cart before the horse. We need to grow our economy. We need to have the jobs available before we contemplate spending money to attract and settle immigrants in Ontario. There was talk previously, on the previous bill—I think it was the member from Trinity–Spadina who brought up the fact that we're heading towards a disproportionate number of seniors in the province of Ontario as the baby boomer cohort ages; we're seeing a disproportionate number of people in the province, a higher and higher percentage every year. We don't have to be actuaries to see where the demographic changes are happening. We're seeing a future for Ontario that's very scary, that we're going to have a large number of seniors requiring additional health care in hospital, as well as home care, physiotherapy—things that the government keeps cutting back on. There are a lot of seniors in my riding who are very concerned. They've seen their

physiotherapy under OHIP cut back just quite recently, this past year or two.

If we cannot attract and keep youth in our province, either by immigration or the youth who were born here in Ontario or other parts of Canada—youth used to travel from other parts of the country to come to Ontario; now our youth are leaving to other parts of the country. If we don't have jobs for the youth and for the younger immigrants, I think the member from Trinity–Spadina is right to be worried and ring the bell of caution and say we're going to be in a situation where we have seniors who require care. Where does the care funding come from? It comes from tax revenue. If we don't have high employment, where are we going to get that tax revenue from? So we're definitely right to be concerned.

I think that this government has had 10 years to work with the federal government and ensure that we had good immigration programs in place. They've had 10 years to grow our economy and lower our jobless rate and grow our industries. Instead, we're seeing shrinkage in the job sector.

High energy costs are of great concern, not just for homeowners but for business owners, and just in the newspapers this week, hospitals are worried that they're seeing their energy costs soar and they don't have the funding for that. All this new technology that we use for health care requires energy, requires electricity and generators. If natural gas and electricity rates are the highest in North America, that's another drain on our health care dollars, that instead of the money going for front-line health care, we're seeing the money directed to energy costs.

I think we all want to have a great balance in the province of Ontario. Certainly Thornhill—I invite all the members of the Legislature from all parties to come up and see Thornhill, what a diverse community it is, how successful it is. We've got two great cities—municipalities—in Thornhill that provide services to immigrants in more languages than I can even list. Our hospitals, as well, provide a lot of translation, just through the staff who work in the hospital because they offer their services to do a lot of translating work just as part of their day-to-day job. I, myself, speak two languages other than English well enough to do my job, which used to be—as an optometrist, I was able to provide care in both Hebrew and French, in addition to English, in my office.

When we talk about welcoming immigrants, people don't really picture the individuals and what those individuals have to offer to our province, not just in low-paying minimum wage jobs, but immigrants who come with incredible skills, incredible experience and incredible knowledge. Once they come to Ontario and they're unable to find a job, they move elsewhere, they put down roots, and it's not easy to entice people back. Once our youth graduate university, college and secondary school and they go out west to find jobs, they're not necessarily coming back. We need to ensure that we have the climate, that everybody has a meaningful job, that we have

the economy that can fund the health care system that we all need and we all rely on.

I think that we cannot blame it on a recession when the rest of the country is thriving. We cannot blame anybody but ourselves. We're all responsible for the government that we elect. I think that we've had a government for 10 years that, I believe, has shown—

Interjection.

1600

Mrs. Gila Martow: I guess the Speaker is returning. I thought maybe I had to sit down. We're just switching Speakers now, for the viewers at home, so I'm pausing.

Welcome back, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Oh, we're doing a rotation of Speakers.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, I was just going to say I hope it's not a reflection on anything I'm saying or doing.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I thought maybe the opposite.

We'll return now to the discussion at hand, which, for those of you who weren't following perhaps, is about having a friendly environment for immigration and how I'm concerned about the cost of this new bureaucracy. I haven't seen any numbers of what it would cost.

I think that we've got a very bloated government.

As I said earlier, we only have to look at fairly recent history, 100 to 200 years ago. That's not that far back. It was a time when government was not in charge of health care, was not in charge of education, was not in charge if you had a senior who needed home care. This was done by family members, by non-profit groups, by religious institutions and organizations. Rightly so, it was felt that too many people weren't getting the care that they needed, the education that they deserved, and the recognition and the fairness, maybe, that was required in a fair and just society. And rightly so, it was felt that government would take over a lot of these institutions and ensure that things were done in a fair and non-discriminatory fashion—and also, to regulate all of the different institutions and all of the different professions, as well as immigration, to keep an eye on things. Obviously, revenue had to be generated by the government to manage all of these public institutions, and income tax was implemented. At the time, taxes were raised to fight wars, but they weren't lowered after the wars were over.

We keep seeing new taxes. This government brought in a health premium tax when they promised not to raise taxes. They just call it—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's still a tax. If it's money out of your pocket that goes to the government, then it's a tax. Otherwise, we are just arguing the—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Well, the problem isn't about raising taxes or not raising taxes. The problem is the collection of taxes and not providing the services that are supposed to be provided with those tax dollars. We all

pay our income taxes, our gas taxes, our health premium taxes, our municipal taxes.

Ontario is the highest-taxed jurisdiction, I believe, in the world. The rate of taxation in Ontario, according to a recent study that was announced just this morning—we are taxed the highest in the world. That would be all right if we also got the best health care in the world and the best education in the world. I see a lot of cuts to health care. I see a lot of cuts to education. And I see soaring costs, not just in terms of taxes, due to government policies. Maybe that's not a direct tax, but in my mind, if money comes out of a family's budget to pay for something that rose in cost because of the government's policies, that might as well be called a tax. If people are seeing their hydro bills double because of a government policy, it doesn't matter who gets that money; the cause is government policies, and we might as well start to call that a tax.

We cannot entice immigrants to come and stay in Ontario if the cost of living is too high and there aren't meaningful, well-paid jobs for them. So, to develop a new bureaucracy at huge cost to the taxpayers of Ontario in order to welcome immigrants to Ontario because it's felt that we need a workforce to provide the revenue tools for our aging population—and the immigrants are willing to come. That's what's so incredible. They're willing to come, even with the knowledge that we want them here to boost our economy so that we can collect the revenue that we need in order to fund all of our social programs and to care for our seniors, even though they've left their seniors back home and often have to send money back to care for them because they can't always sponsor their older family members or bring them when they do come.

I think it's unfair of us to expect the taxpayers of Ontario to pay for another bureaucracy in order to entice immigrants who aren't going to stay in Ontario. So unless we can show that we have the jobs and the quality of life available that the immigrants expect, they will not stay in Ontario. They will move to other parts of the country, and the Ontario taxpayers are footing the bill.

I think that we really need to re-examine the big picture of what we want for our future, for our future seniors, for ourselves. We're all going to be seniors, and quite a few of us in the room are already seniors and grandparents, as we said this morning. We congratulated the member from Windsor—Tecumseh, who was speaking earlier, on becoming a grandparent. We're all in that situation where we're about to be seniors, I think, or are worried about our aging parents.

I'm sure that people in the Legislature and people at home watching are worried about how they're going to care for their parents in the current climate, where jobs are precarious, where businesses are suffering. Even if people are willing to spend their own money to care for seniors, they need to have the money to spend. If they deplete all of their savings caring for their own parents, and if their children aren't able to find meaningful work and are just working two part-time jobs without benefits and a chance at long-term employment, it's not unreason-

able for people to feel anxious and to raise that concern that perhaps their government isn't looking at the big picture and isn't concerned enough with the future of the province and, perhaps, doesn't quite understand how important each and every person is.

Maybe we get too caught up in talking about constituencies and ridings and demographics, and we forget that when we talk about numbers, we're talking about individual people. I think that that's why it's so meaningful when the little girl Madi came, who had cystic fibrosis. When it puts a face to the issue, that we're all human beings, from all parties—and we start to really pay a bit closer attention to the issue when we're faced with the actual person who is having difficulty.

We all know that there are limits. There are limits to what governments can do, what doctors can do, hospitals and even education systems, but the question is, can we do better, and should we do better? We definitely can do better, and we definitely should do better. I think that it's shameful if we're all here to take care of not just one patient but every single person in the province, their health, their education and their quality of life.

We should have an incredible, happy province of Ontario, and there are far too many people who are looking for work in what should be the best place in the world to find employment. In fact, we have the highest unemployment in the country of Canada, which means we probably have some of the highest unemployment in North America, and it's not acceptable.

1610

We really have to not just look at creating more government bureaucracy, which takes money out of health care and takes money out of education when we have additional government bureaucracies, and we have to keep as much money as possible where it's needed, where it should be and get that economy moving and focus on creating the jobs and the growth.

If we have to go company by company and say, "What will it take to get job growth without costing the taxpayers of Ontario?"—because of course we all know that the government could just borrow more money from the bank, which we see this government is very good at. We could just borrow money from the bank tomorrow and just write a cheque to everybody in the province for \$1 million and just say, "Whoopie; everybody is rich." But we all understand that when the government of Ontario borrows money, as has been going on—we have the highest deficit. In fact, the debt in Ontario is pretty much equal to the debt of every other province combined in Canada. That's unacceptable for the province that used to be the driving force, economically, of the country, of Confederation. It's not acceptable.

We have to focus on the economy and we have to stop talking about what we're going to do in terms of growing government bureaucracy when we haven't addressed the important issue, which really is the jobless rate in the province and not just the high unemployment but the type of jobs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm—

Mr. Bill Walker: One of three.

Mrs. Gila Martow: One of three speakers, yes.

Mr. Bill Walker: You should thank them all.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, thank you to all the speakers. I'm one of the newest elected. Two of us were elected just a couple of months ago. I had a lot to learn, but I've really had support from the PC caucus as well as from members from the other two parties—just learning by watching, often. As I'm speaking to the Speaker, I'm wondering if I'm supposed to say Madam Speaker or Mr. Speaker, depending on the gender. Isn't that funny? But thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Thornhill. I think there are a couple of things here that have to be corrected for the record. Maybe she can comment on them when she has two additional minutes.

She said that the majority of immigrants are no longer coming to Ontario. While it is true that it has fallen below 50% of the total immigrant intake into Canada every year, it's still above 40% or 43%. No other province comes anywhere close, including Alberta and Saskatchewan, which are lucky to get about 15% apiece.

She talked about creating a bureaucracy. This bill is very timid in its nature. It is going to choose only 3% to 4% of the immigrants coming to Ontario. The balance of the bureaucracy and the balance of everything that is done is done federally, abroad, through the visa departments. If there are any workers in this, they would choose the provincial nominees and the economic class. Those people are not coming here to a bad economy—I will agree that there is some bad economy in some parts of Ontario—they are coming here to improve the economy. That is why they're provincial nominees. They have a specific skill which is in demand in order to help an industry or a commercial operation for which there is a great need, or they're in the economic class and their responsibility is to come here with money in order to set up businesses and employ Ontarians. So I think that the arguments that have been made are perhaps not as correct as they should be.

This bill is a very timid bill. I've already spoken to it. I worked in immigration for 20 years before becoming a politician. It is very timid. What is being suggested here is only a small portion of what Quebec and other provinces are successfully doing. If we want to lag further behind Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan, then we need to do nothing, as has been suggested. If we want to move ahead—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege to speak on the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161. As my honourable colleague from Beaches–East York has quite rightly cited, largely it's a federal responsibility.

Having said that, I think it's important for Ontario and our various government bodies to actually move into this jurisdiction, as was pointed out by other speakers, to be

selective of the immigrants who come and grace our province with their presence on an economic level—perhaps also skill sets, perhaps screening that would be done in a more efficient and long-term, beneficial manner as they come here to Ontario.

I have to just say also, Speaker, with your indulgence, sitting here, watching some of the changes that the federal government has been making, frankly speaking, to my mind, it seems as if they've almost essentially forgotten about Ontario. I think that there's an underlying ethos, thinking, philosophy on the federal side that Canada is now Alberta and maybe some surrounding environs, because from what I can see, they have been largely moving the resources, the incentives and the economic-class immigrants elsewhere. Whether that's a previous reflection of the number of MPs that were part of the Tory caucus federally or not, that's perhaps for wiser heads than mine to be decided.

But I think that this is an important tool, and we certainly support our colleague Michael Coteau, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, as part of an integrated plan for the benefit of Ontarians. As I've said, whether we're looking for economic-class immigrants or skill set immigrants, the individuals will hopefully be more than just these temporary foreign workers that we seem to hear so many negative things about.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to compliment the member from Thornhill for her remarks as a regulated health professional herself. As an optometrist, she's well qualified to express whether things are present or not in the current system.

I think the important part is that this bill has seven sections to it. In each section there's a requirement of the government to set up some process. It sounds like a tremendous red tape bill, although I want to put on the record formally that we do support the bill and we support many of the accommodations here. Like in all things, we're calling on this government to actually have a jobs plan. This sounds like a red tape plan more than anything else.

When you look at the sections themselves—I think some of the comments made previously by the member from Etobicoke North are a good example of not having the interests of Ontario at heart. He shouldn't be talking about the federal government. They love to blame someone else for everything. They have no other motive out here but to blame someone else for all the problems in Ontario today. I think that they are taking the lead from federal skills programs and the fact that we have to now have what they call the "expression of interest." This is extremely important when you're working in partnership with the federal government. They are trying to create jobs. In fact, they're trying to create access, if you read the section I'm looking at here, to persons who are coming to Canada and putting some pressure on the college of a health profession to make registration—numbers 5 and 7 both talk about "a reasonable time. The

registrar of a college is required to establish a process for dealing with" applications. So they need to recognize credentials from foreign workers, and I would support that as well as looking at the some of the modernization that they're trying to do federally in other programs.

I support the member from—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I particularly listened to the member from Beaches—East York when he did his lead-in on the bill on how important he felt it was that we aren't really pushing far enough to welcome new immigrants into Ontario and that we should be looking at other models in other provinces in order to be successful if we're going to attract new Canadians to Ontario.

Some of the statistics that we have: Currently, it's estimated that Ontario will face a shortage of 364,000 skilled workers by 2025. The aging population of our skilled workers is diminishing as time goes on and we need to make sure that we have a real, solid strategy in order to attract skilled labour into Ontario.

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Speaking from experience, my parents were new Canadians in Ontario—I'm trying to think here—over 45 years ago, anyway. My dad got a job as a labourer when he came. He learned that skill as he arrived here, but there were also very many new Canadians who came that did have skills that contributed to the construction industry, as one of the major industries that needed skilled labour. A lot of the Italian and Portuguese population in the London area really were a driving force in building the city, and they're very proud of that.

Knowing that we're going to have that skills shortage, of course we should cultivate our own students and our own population to make sure that those positions also flourish. But we can't meet those needs, they're so high. By 2025, if we're going to be making sure that we have that skilled force here, we need to encourage immigration in a smart way in order to make sure we don't have those gaps in skilled labour.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for reminding all of us that for most of us, I think, our parents were immigrants, or if not, our grandparents. I think Toby Barrett—sorry; I shouldn't say his name. What's the name of the riding?

Mr. Bill Walker: Haldimand—Norfolk. The duke.

Mrs. Gila Martow: The duke. His family goes back many generations on a farm in his riding.

It is important for the government of the day to ensure that immigrants are welcomed and to ensure that when immigrants come here, they're treated fairly. But the focus really needs to be on them finding jobs.

My parents both weren't born in Canada, and both went to university in Montreal at McGill at a time when the Jewish community had to earn 10% higher. So basically their marks were lowered by 10%, and that's a topic to remind us how important it is for the government to

ensure fairness and that immigrants come and that their expectations are met. But we do know that we don't have to worry about fairness in terms of our academic institutions for our immigrant population.

What we do have to worry is, we have to worry about their job prospects. That has really been the focus of what I spoke about earlier. The issue isn't about whether or not Ontario, as the member for Trinity-Spadina said—we're still, even though it's lower, one of the most attractive places for immigrants to come. That isn't the issue. The issue is, are the immigrants staying in Ontario? Again, there's no point having government bureaucracy if the immigrants are going to come to Ontario and turn and leave.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up today to say a few comments about Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, last updated in 1991, which I think is an important piece here. Certainly the Liberal government has had ample time to bring forward progressive pieces of legislation that would strengthen our immigration policies and practices and supports for new immigrants who are coming into the province.

Certainly they're very quick on certain issues. They were very quick to announce almost \$1 billion in Waterloo region last week—very, very quick to do that, very consistent with them making announcements that are actually reannouncements of funding that was already announced prior. One billion, though: \$1 billion. Not \$1 million, not \$50 million, not \$500 million; almost \$1 billion. It's just incredible to me how quickly they can spend money, even though we don't have it. Yet, here we are, 10 years—actually, it's almost now 13 years since a piece of legislation within their mandate has been brought forward with regard to immigration. It is very interesting for me, because the political context in the province of Ontario is incredibly challenging right now.

Also, at the federal level—and as has already been pointed out, this piece of legislation has very strict limitations based on the federal government. If anyone has been watching the news of late, the federal government has completely undermined any sort of progressive policy with regard to immigration policy in this country. One has only to have a read or to watch—and thank goodness for the CBC; a special shout-out for the CBC, because they broke the story on the temporary foreign worker program, which was supposed to target an economic gap or a skills gap in this country. You have primarily women who are marginalized, who are vulnerable, coming into the country and provinces, working at McDonald's. The last time I checked, there were some senior citizens working in a McDonald's and a Tim Hortons, because they don't have income security. Yet, here we are: We have temporary foreign workers at the McDonald's out in BC, and they're living in some sort of a motel, all congregated in the centre of a commune. This

is Canada in 2014. That's the federal government and their policy—and their failure to implement a progressive policy, I might add.

I mentioned the federal government within the context of this piece of legislation, because, of course, there are some caveats with regard to Bill 161. One of them is that any new programs would have to be approved by the federal government. There is no guarantee, of course, that this would happen. Just in case you missed it, I am firmly saying that I have no confidence in the federal government to implement a progressive immigration policy in this country. In fact, I would go so far as to say that I'm in a deficit position, from a confidence perspective, with regard to the federal government. That said, as we have approached every new piece of legislation which has come to this Legislature, we are committed to reading it, for instance, and examining it and conducting some research, and of course, we are happy to see some action.

To that end, though, we need to be very aware of the fact that this bill does not address many of the fundamental problems facing newcomers and it will not necessarily be successful in achieving all elements of the bill, such as meeting new-immigrant targets. So, at second reading, this is our opportunity to put forward some suggestions and some ideas as it moves forward to committee. Hopefully, we can fundamentally change some aspects of this piece of legislation.

But just to reiterate, the Liberal government has no excuse for not acting sooner.

What's in the bill? A previous speaker talked about the economic impact of immigration on the province and perhaps some of those skills gaps. This bill provides authority for Ontario to establish and govern immigrant-selection programs for both temporary and permanent immigrants. I'm sure the thinking is that they can do a better job than the federal Conservative Party.

It also allows Ontario to set target levels of number of persons selected by Ontario selection programs, in order to meet Ontario's economic and labour market needs. This is a good point. Any sort of new immigration should be targeted. It should be focused on some of those skills that are required in the province of Ontario. I was just speaking with the tech sector in Kitchener-Waterloo—Communitech—and currently they are fighting to get three qualified tech workers into Ontario, into Canada. So there is a notable disconnect between the federal party policy and the provincial policy.

There would have to be some coordination, obviously, to ensure that qualified people who are seeking employment opportunities in this province, and that those opportunities are clearly viable and needed—that they should be filled.

This piece of legislation also enables the minister to conduct research, organize educational and training programs, and appoint committees on immigration-related issues. I'm not sure that we need more committees. I'm not sure that we need more rules and regulations on this.

I think that I'll talk, in a few minutes, about the history of how we got to this place and this time with this piece of legislation.

What's interesting is the educational component. I sort of relay back my experience in the education system, with the Ontario public school boards and the Canadian federal level as well. There is a definite disconnect between accepting new immigrants and refugees into our province, into our country, into our schools, and not having a correlating level of resources to ensure that they can be successful. In many instances—and I think a report just came out today by People for Education—school boards and principals of elementary schools are sending home students who they don't have the resources to cope with and to ensure that they are getting a proper education. Some of those reasons are safety, but certainly they are resource-based. I hope that report sends up a red flag in the education sector.

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But it does relate to this piece of legislation, because if you are accepting new immigrants in, then you have to give them a level playing field and you have to give them a chance to be successful, and we have not seen that in this province.

It also allows the minister to establish registries for both employers and recruiters that are interested in participating in Ontario's selection programs, and this is good. There has to be some coordination; there has to be. There are businesses, obviously, in the province of Ontario that don't know that they could potentially access a skill set outside of the province.

But it also leads one to ask a very rational question: Why do we not have that skill set in the province of Ontario? Where is the job strategy? Where is the focus on training, especially with older workers? I went to an older-worker forum not that long ago, and it was heart-breaking. You have people who have worked in one particular field their entire lives. They want to be part of the workforce. They are willing to come to work; they want to be trained. They want the opportunities to enter a second or a third career, and those opportunities are just not there. I think that there has to be a balance going forward.

In particular, though, with the education component, just to go back to it for a second—Kitchener-Waterloo in particular is one of the fourth-largest draws for new immigrants and refugees in the country. A lot of people don't know that. When those refugees come into our community, we have to fight to get them the resources to deal with the experience that they have had in their host country. Usually, obviously, if you are a refugee, you have experienced some trauma. Post-traumatic stress disorder is an ongoing issue not only with children but the entire family, and it is incumbent on us, as a host province and as a host country, to provide some level of compassion, some humanity, some resources to help them transition successfully into our communities.

This bill also lays out a compliance and enforcement regime, including inspection, investigation powers,

offences, and penalties for both individuals and organizations. This piece is going to get pulled at and teased away, I think, at committee. I want to know more about these compliance standards, but I think it's also a pivotal piece for us as a party, New Democrats, to talk about what's not in the bill.

What's not in the bill is an ironclad guarantee that Ontario will be able to set their own targets in regard to recruiting immigrants, which, as I've already stated, is the goal or the intention of this bill. There is federal paramountcy when it comes to immigration in Ontario, and there is nothing that guarantees that the federal government will agree with this legislation.

In fact, we've seen a lot of conflict between the provincial Liberal government and, of course, the federal government. For some reason, the Prime Minister was in our riding last week, and he was asked about the relationship between the province and his government. Of course he's going to say, "Well, there is a responsibility on all parts to come to the table." This is an important cause for both the provincial government and the federal government to come to the table. It's not just an economic imperative, but there definitely is a humanitarian component as well.

What's not in the bill? The bill does not address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional fields. I told this story the last time I spoke to this piece of legislation. In 2007, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty—the fellow who will not be named, sort of like Voldemort in the Harry Potter series—came to my riding and said to a room packed with new immigrants and foreign-trained workers, many of whom were doctors, many of whom were driving cabs and taxis and working in labour, in menial work—they were told, "You will be able to practise in your professional field." That promise was made. They still talk about it to this day.

Here we are today, looking at a piece of legislation which, for all intents and purposes, probably has good intention. I believe that there are some good intentions with regard to this legislation, but the mechanisms to follow through on the legislation are not built into it. So, once again, when it gets to second reading, as I'm sure it will at some point—I mean, not second reading. When it gets to committee, we will try to build some supports into the legislation.

It does not deal with settlement issues, broadly defined. I think that this has been pointed out very well by OCASI. Also, the not-for-profit sector has not been built into this piece of legislation as well. What a missed opportunity. The not-for-profit sector knows this field so well. They know the people. They know their communities. They know how to connect people. They have not, for some reason, been incorporated into this piece of legislation. I think there is definitely room for improvement. New Democrats believe strongly that the not-for-profit sector has the capacity and the willingness to be part of the solution from an economic perspective, from a humanitarian perspective and from a new-

immigrants-finding-their-potential perspective. We would generally say that we share the concerns of OCASI that the not-for-profit sector has been left out of this—their very important capacity to be part of the solution.

Where are we and why are we here? The general background—actually, more importantly, why is this legislation important in this province today? It is estimated that Ontario will face a shortage of 364,000 skilled workers by 2025. I think that this should cause a lot of alarm for a lot of us. I think it points to the fact that we have not had a discernible, successful job strategy in this province, one that has weathered the recession and bounced back with some resiliency. These skilled workers—obviously, the 364,000 shortage is an ongoing issue that all of us should share, quite honestly. Immigration would need to be more than 2.5 times greater than it is today to offset the decline in Ontario's labour force being caused by the aging population.

From 2001 to 2011, Ontario's share of immigrants to Canada dropped by almost a third. We used to be a country which embraced new immigrants because this is a new country and because all of us are either one, two or potentially three generations away from being immigrants ourselves. We should want every new immigrant who comes into this country to be able to reach their potential, to have the educational opportunities, to have the resources and to be welcomed.

Clearly, when new immigrants come into this province—I'll just quote from Nicholas Keung's Toronto Star article from March 3. He says, "Canada's new class of immigrants is younger and more promising than ever: in their mid-20s and 30s, with Canadian education credentials and work experience—and jobs already lined up.

"To achieve the immigrant dream, they're prepared to pay their dues, working hard on temporary study and work permits to prove their value to Canada before earning what used to come much more easily: permanent resident status."

It is quite incredible how we treat temporary foreign workers in this country as second-class citizens. We should look at ourselves through the lens of our forefathers of the former generations, who came to this country, who were accepted and who had a platform and an opportunity to be successful. One of those key pieces was economic opportunity. The research and the evidence is profound. New immigrants want to work. They understand what it means to be in this country. If you're a refugee and you come to Canada—I served on the refugee reception board for four years. The first time I saw a refugee see water come out of a tap—you will never forget that in your life, because they can't believe that clean water is a right in this country. They want to fight for those rights. As soon as you give them the tools and the empowerment opportunities, they want to be part of the solution and they want to be part of the community because they understand what a privilege it is to be in this country and to be in this province.

I actually had the opportunity this weekend to attend the first annual Diversity Awards in Kitchener–Waterloo.

It was hosted by the Tamil association of Kitchener–Waterloo. It's their 25th anniversary. To hear the stories of how important culture, acceptance and inclusion mean to them and to their children was incredibly emotional. I think that within the political context of Bill 161, it should challenge us to build legislation which can be effective and which can be supportive of our communities.

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As I've said, there are some gaps within this legislation as it is crafted right now. But Bill 161 works specifically to increase the class of economic immigrants, and this is a key difference with this piece of legislation and some of the stories that I've been talking about.

As a backgrounder, though, the 2012 expert round table released a report called *Expanding Our Routes to Success*. It included 32 recommendations. So this is back in 2012. Following this, the minister at the time announced the launch of *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*. This report sets the following targets. The big question, though, for all of us is whether Bill 161 has the ability to make significant progress on all of these targets. I mean, you have to remember that this is a long time coming.

But some of those targets—"request a doubling of our provincial nominee program limit to 2,000 in 2013, increasing to 5,000 in 2014." I think the province of Quebec puts us to shame on these stats. I remember the member from Beaches–East York giving us some context on this. There are some provinces that recognize that reaching out strategically to skilled new immigrants around the world is a way to strengthen their economy and strengthen the fabric of their society.

Some of these other recommendations, though, are: "maximize the potential and use of temporary foreign workers and international students." So, having learned from the complete failure of the federal government with regard to the temporary foreign worker programs, where the rights of those workers are being violated because they are vulnerable and because they are marginalized, we need to make sure, if this is one of the goals of Bill 161, as stated in *Expanding Our Routes to Success* and then *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*, that those rights of those new immigrants are protected. We need to make sure that their rights as citizens—they have the potential to be citizens in the province of Ontario. That's the promise of progressive immigration policy. That's the ultimate goal: to be a citizen in this great province.

We also have to ensure that, as those skilled workers come into this province, their children and their families have the potential to reach their potential, and that means a comprehensive educational strategy. That means having affordable housing. That means transit that works for people. That means making sure that Bill 161 is comprehensive, that it can be successful and that it puts new immigrants at the centre, not the politics at the centre.

I look forward to hearing some of the comments from some of the other speakers here this afternoon. I don't

know if you've noticed, but I'm definitely passionate about immigration policy. I see it as a solution, and I see the abuses that have happened, especially with the temporary foreign workers, and it enrages me. I'm ashamed that our country treats temporary foreign workers this way, especially because they are primarily women. I think it is incumbent on all of us to build a piece of legislation which we can all be proud of in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I listened with great interest to the member from Kitchener talk about the immigration experience. I'm an immigrant to this country. I came here exactly 60 years ago, on June 17, 1954, so I'll be celebrating my 60th anniversary in Canada. I came with my family from the Netherlands. My parents didn't speak any English at all. I can tell you, in those days, certainly, there weren't as many services available for immigrants as there are today.

As I always say, everybody—other than the aboriginal peoples that have inhabited this country for many, many generations—all of us came from another country at some point in time. It may have been the Loyalists 200 years ago, or it may have been people who have come just within the last 10 years, 20 years, 50 years, 100 years. They all came for one reason and one reason only, and that was to find a better way of life for themselves and their families and their children etc.

Having said that, I find it rather strange that we would even have a bill like this before the Legislature today, because I'd always assumed that immigration was purely a federal responsibility. Certainly, the federal government traditionally has been mainly involved in the whole immigration movement here in the province of Ontario and, indeed, through Canada.

But I think this bill speaks to precisely the issue that the member just talked about: the fact that we do not have enough skilled workers in this province right now. I guess by another 10 years or so, that will increase to well into the 300,000 to 400,000 skilled worker shortages in this province.

So whatever we can do collectively, not only in this province but together with the federal government, to make the immigrant experience a better experience, so much the better. That's why I hope we will all support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

M. Jerry J. Ouellette: L'histoire de ma famille remonte aussi loin que le deuxième bateau venu de France en 1604. Essentially what that means, Madam Speaker, is that my family's history goes back to the second boat from France in 1604, on my father's side.

But if you look on my mother's side, her parents were Polish and Ukrainian. My grandmother showed up in 1927, around Christmastime, on the east coast with nothing but a bag of clothes that she had, and that's it. It was wrapped in a sheet—nothing more, to come here for the opportunity to make a difference.

Her father came from Poland, and so I've got Polish and Ukrainian on my mother's side. He came across and he was a factory worker, a man who never owned a car, nor did he ever miss owning a car. He had more part fingers than whole because he was given the opportunity to leave what took place in the home country, the old country back in Poland. I can always remember him sending funds back to ensure that his family was taken care of because they came here for the opportunity to make a difference.

Not only that, but on my father's side, his mother's parents were Scottish and Irish. With a name like Ouellette, I've got obviously French, but also *ma mère* was a First Nation individual, so the family has Métis status. We've got French, First Nation, Polish, Ukrainian, Scottish and Irish, but it makes me, like most others here, Canadian.

We need to focus and ensure that these individuals who are coming in—because quite frankly, when I go into the schools, I ask, “Who wants to be a taxicab driver here? Who wants to work in a variety store, in a corner store?” Every one of them says the same thing: “Not me.”

We need these individuals to come in and make a difference, whether it's migrant workers working in the fields, picking apples and taking care of the fruit in the fall or the various aspects that take place. We need to work to ensure that these individuals are working in the best interests of Ontario, especially people like Charlie, from Coffee Culture, who came so many years ago from Afghanistan to make a difference. Now he owns his own business and is very proud to be Canadian.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to be able to comment on some of the remarks that were made by the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, who always speaks eloquently and passionately about any of the issues that she brings forward in the Legislature.

I just wanted to focus on one of the comments that she made, and that is the Liberal inaction that we've seen or haven't seen in terms of anything tangible coming forward in the last 10 years. She said that the Liberals really have no excuse for not acting sooner. She mentioned that they have all sorts of other priorities, whether it's appointing their friends and now family members at eHealth, wasting over a billion dollars in moving around gas plants to secure four Liberal seats in the last election or wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on Liberal insiders at Ornge—the list just goes on and on and on. But when it comes to paying for their expenditures by increasing our workforce and reinforcing and growing our economy, the Liberals have been essentially silent.

The other thing is that we need to be looking ahead. We need to prepare for the eventual decline of Ontario's labour force that is being caused by our aging population. This is something that was also mentioned by the member. As the member from Kitchener—Waterloo mentioned, we will have a significant labour shortage of about 364,000 skilled workers by 2025, and much needs to be

done now to prepare ourselves for this eventuality. Really, we're seeing that not a lot is being done. We were waiting 10 years for this to come forward. I think it was a little bit revealing for the minister without portfolio to say that he didn't even know that the province has a role to play in immigration, and I think that speaks a lot to the Liberals' immigration policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'm pleased to rise to speak again with respect to Bill 161. As we know, Bill 161 is a first step in implementing our immigration strategy, a strategy that was informed by consultations and by an expert round table, consultations that I undertook when I was the parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

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Through those consultations, we spoke to agencies, we spoke to employers and we spoke with newcomers as well. What did we hear? We heard how proud newcomers are to be here in Ontario, how Ontario continues to be a destination of choice and how so many are still settling in Ontario. Why? Because of the opportunities, because of the better life that they can provide for their family and for their children.

As you know, I'm from Windsor, which has the fourth-largest immigration population in Canada. I'm proud of the work of our many agencies that have been brought up that work with our newcomers on a daily basis, organizations like the Multicultural Council, W5, WEST and the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence.

On Thursday of last week, when I was in Windsor, I had the privilege to attend the Multicultural Council's Herb Gray Harmony Awards gala. It was named, of course, after our local MP who served his community, our country, for almost 40 years, and in those 40 years always supported acceptance and diversity and really defended the rights of everyone in our community. There were two awards that were awarded that night. One was a Harmony Award, which is for individuals who actively participate in building an inclusive community. That was awarded to our mayor, Eddie Francis. The other award was a Champion Award, which celebrates the contributions that immigrants make to our community, who built our communities. That was given to Floyd Cacciavillani. When Floyd was speaking about his start in Ontario, how he landed at Pier 21 and took the train to Ontario, it brought tears to my eyes, because it was the story of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for the comments from the minister without portfolio, the member from Oshawa, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, and the minister of youth services and responsible for women's issues.

I think everyone commented a little bit on where they've come from and how they view immigration. That

should be a challenge to all of us to make Bill 161 even stronger, even better.

When I was speaking about the diversity awards that I attended last week, a new immigrant, a young girl, told me that she views culture as a way for her survival. But they need jobs in order to be here. Going forward, there are some outstanding questions with regard to this legislation. This would be my direct question to the minister: Can the minister tell us whether programs are being designed that would reach out to newcomers before they arrive to provide a realistic sense of what is required in order to work in their field in Ontario? I think that this question is pivotal, because there are so many new immigrants that come here and are disappointed because those doors do not open. Those retraining opportunities are not there. The educational system is not equipped to deal with ESL and ELL, and then of course the mental health issues that accompany some of the refugees, which I referenced earlier.

We know that much more work needs to be done, Madam Speaker, when it comes to bridging programs and support for employers. We know this. The fact is that we cannot count on the federal level of government to do the right thing. They are needlessly extending the immigration process. They are making it harder for us to be accepting of new immigrants in the country, and therefore that has an effect on Ontario. We need to get it right as much as we can, and then we all need to work together to fight a federal government which doesn't understand the value of immigration in our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We will have no further debate at this time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Orders of the day.

ELECTRONIC PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS SUR LA SANTÉ FIGURANT DANS UN DOSSIER DE SANTÉ ÉLECTRONIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 20, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne les dossiers de santé électroniques.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): When this was last debated, we had completed questions and comments on the remarks made by the member for Nickel Belt.

Further debate? The member from Thornhill.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Wow, this is your day.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Actually, it's your day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, it's your day.

Mrs. Gila Martow: If you get to listen to me speak, it's definitely your day.

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to speak on the bill, eHealth, which is Bill 78. I just want to disclose that I have quite a bit of experience. It was an experience, and I developed experience, implementing electronic health records in my office, which is attached to Markham Stouffville Hospital in the Markham area. It's an office with two ophthalmologists, one optometrist and a lot of equipment. I don't know when was the last time people have been to get their eyes checked, but hopefully it will be in the not-too-distant future, because our sight is obviously valuable to all of us. There is a system that we implemented in our office—hopefully, it's not a conflict for me to mention the name of the actual software program. Is that a problem if I mention?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, you can go ahead and mention it.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Okay, it's called OSCAR—I'm not sure why—but it was developed at McMaster University, and I was told that it was developed with doctors. It wasn't just computer programmers, it wasn't Liberal government consultants; it was actual physicians who had experience with what doctors needed. They focused, really, on creating an electronic health record which, if you can picture a chart that your doctors keeps—most doctors don't use a blank piece of paper; it's a piece of paper with a lot of little boxes to put what medication the patient is on, whether or not they have allergies, whether or not they've ever had health problems, family history, why they're there for the visit, and then all the test results and, finally, diagnosis and treatment; then, of course, all the patient's information, their OHIP number, address and so forth.

Basically, it's to take that type of a chart and put it on the computer in a way that a doctor who isn't so computer-savvy—because physicians spend a lot of time on their education, and the newer generation is very computer-savvy, but some of the physicians who are maybe more of the age of us in the Legislature did not grow up with computers. They had used charts for many years. You can imagine, say, a 58-year-old physician who has never worked on a computer all of a sudden trying to get electronic health records and still practise in a safe manner.

It's obvious what the advantages of electronic health records are. I mean, there's the business standpoint, which is, a doctor's office is a business; it's part of it. They pay rent, and the paper charts take up a lot of space. Well, that's a room in itself that the doctors have to pay rent on. Then there's the fact that the staff and the doc-

tors are always looking for charts that we don't say are lost; we just say they're misplaced. But the reality is that oftentimes patients are there to have multiple tests on different days, possibly to see different people on the same day, and everybody needs the chart. It's hard to share a paper chart, but an electronic health record obviously simplifies that.

Then there is the incredible amount of data that's stored and easily accessed, because if you have in a box that a patient is allergic to penicillin, you can do a search so easily and search "penicillin," and it will bring up all the patients who are allergic to penicillin—and perhaps there's a drug recall. So we can see the incredible benefits in terms of safety, in terms of saving space and in terms of saving time.

There was a lot of research that we put into what type of system we should get. We were well aware that the system that was developed at McMaster—through taxpayers' dollars, I might add—was really geared to family physicians. But it's such a simple system to use; it had what we call a very low learning curve, so that you didn't have to be so computer-savvy to use it. It was very basic. Even now, I realize that staff comes and goes and moves around, and you don't have to go through this incredible learning process to have new staff. New staff always tell me how much easier the system is. It's just evident how things are going to be working.

1700

What's difficult is that in an ophthalmology and, obviously, partly, in an optometry office—in my case, I was in an ophthalmology office. An ophthalmology office has a lot of tests that are actually computers in themselves, with software. You need to have those tests interact with your electronic health records; otherwise, the system can't function, because once you have to have a paper chart to put in test results, well, you might as well have a paper chart for the doctor's visits as well.

Now we have to come up with software that can speak between two different software packages, and things start to get very complicated. We actually had to delay a few months because we had to wait for the software to be complete to talk between the machines and the patient's record. I'm happy to say that for the last three years, things have been running quite smoothly. There are constant updates. We are dealing with the Ministry of Health, because there is a program in place to compensate doctors for part of the costs—which far surpasses the purchase of, what I would consider good, fairly luxury cars—to implement the hardware and the software for electronic health records, even with a program that's inexpensive, such as the one we used out of McMaster.

It really makes me wonder—and that's why I'm so happy to speak on this bill—why our own government didn't try to team up with software that was already being used by, what I'm told, is a third of the family doctors in the province; why they didn't consider—or if they did, why aren't they speaking about it? If they did speak to the developers at McMaster University about the eHealth program that they developed right here in the

province of Ontario through taxpayers' dollars, why was a billion dollars wasted reinventing the wheel, trying to develop software that would work for the doctors and the hospitals in this province?

When we found out that the money was spent and there was no electronic health records system in place for our physicians and for our hospitals, we were told for a couple of years that at least we developed, through the Ministry of Health, a registry for diabetic patients. That's what we kept reading in the newspaper. Well, this year it came out that we didn't even develop a registry for diabetic patients, so I'm not sure why that was put out when it wasn't the case.

It's unfortunate, because the money that was spent on electronic health records so needlessly and so carelessly by this Liberal government—that could have just done the simple research that we did with a group of ophthalmologists. We all met and we discussed which software we should buy as a group—and have some control and work together and network. There are physicians—actually, quite a few surgeons—who were engineers first. It's very interesting to realize that there are a lot of people who ultimately aim for medical school and decide—instead of doing their undergrad in health sciences, they actually study engineering. There's a huge networking between engineers, especially with surgeons, because surgery involves so much equipment, and the engineers are the ones who go into medicine—those engineers who do study medicine, who seem to be able to create those new technologies that are driving all of the incredible improvements we see, but also the incredible rise in costs of health care in North America and the rest of the world. It's with these rising costs in health care, including the electronic health records—which obviously make it so much safer for patients, because the doctors are able to do those searches that they weren't able to do before, and access things. If a patient even has had maybe an artificial hip or something like that and there's some kind of recall and there are different manufacturers, they're able to so quickly access their patients.

Another huge advantage is that the doctors can be at home, they can be at multiple hospitals, and they don't have to carry around the charts because they can just access it through computers. So you don't have to worry about your doctor's car being broken into and your chart being stolen because you're having surgery. They used to have to actually physically take the chart home and then take it to surgery if they went to surgery at the hospital the next day, if their office wasn't on site. You can imagine all the room for error or lost charts. Doctors have lives, they go out, and maybe a chart could be lost here or there.

A doctor could be at a conference in New York City, and a patient is having a problem—maybe it's a drug reaction; maybe it's symptoms of a new problem—and the doctor is able to just go on any computer that is set up to access their server. Usually, they travel with their laptops or iPads, and they have access to their patient records. Isn't that fantastic technology and incredible service?

The doctors can't do it alone. It was very unfortunate last week that we read of somebody suggesting that it's the doctors that are driving up health costs when that absolutely isn't the case, and listing gross salaries of doctors. You could go to a restaurant that sells \$2 million worth of meals in a year and might not even take home more than \$50 a day in profit, or maybe is even losing money. We all know that that gross does not translate into income. Certainly, when we look at specialists' offices, the equipment that they have to buy out of their income, they have to pay their staff and they have to pay their rent—I always feel that the physicians in Canada are treated as small business people when it suits the government and they're treated as government employees when it suits the government. So they have the worst situation, because they don't get a pension, they don't get sick days and they don't get their rent covered, their staff covered or the equipment covered, but then they have the government mandating things and controlling the profession, as it were, and also controlling their ability to run their practice in the best way possible.

We all know that Alberta has taken over from Ontario as the driving economy in Canada. My older son studied medicine in Montreal at McGill and went to do his residency in Alberta. He tells me often about the incredible health records in the hospital he's at—he's in Edmonton—and the efficiencies in the system there. I think that if only Ontario would have looked to Alberta—they had implemented an electronic health system that was functioning extremely well before we even embarked on the failed adventure of eHealth in Ontario. All we had to do was go to our colleagues in Alberta and say, "How much to implement your system with you advising us?" I'm fairly certain that it would have been a tiny, minute fraction of what we ended up wasting, chasing electronic health records and not achieving it.

I would appeal to everybody who sees their doctors to ask the doctor just to show them what the electronic health record looks like on the screen, because it is an unfortunate part, actually, of health records that the doctors are often facing the computer instead of facing the patient. There are always negatives to any new system, but oftentimes the patients have no idea what it is the doctor is looking at on the screen. Maybe they feel ignored; I hope not. But let the patients ask their doctor just for a quick look at even a blank chart to have some understanding of what the technology is and what the technology does and what it is that we need to get moving in Ontario, and to see that we have the type of health care system that the residents are paying for through their taxes and that they deserve.

1710

They're paying for a system with expert health care in terms of physicians, which I think they're getting; with fantastic nursing; with safe hospitals, which means that the infection rate is low and that the equipment is kept up to date.

They're also paying for a system where electronic health records are implemented—not just implemented

but maintained, because I think that that's a big cost of it that oftentimes people don't understand. It's a machine, just like a car, and you cannot buy a car and not expect some maintenance. Software needs to be constantly updated, which is expensive, and it needs to be repaired when it breaks down or there are bugs.

We need to have policies in place to ensure, when patients' information is implemented into health care systems, that their privacy is respected; that people can't come into an office and easily hack into the servers and access health care information; that it's very secure but that it's also secure from physical damage, which is, obviously, not to be stolen and that we have a locked server room without windows—I've heard of offices where the health care records are stored on a desktop at the receptionist's feet and the cleaners come in at night and mop around it, and that's not considered secure at all; that it's also secure in terms of a malfunction of the actual server, and that if the server has some kind of meltdown or there is possibly even a flood or a fire in the building, there is some kind of backup system in place for all that information.

We're seeing more and more of what I call "in the clouds" but I guess it's just "cloud" backup systems in place, so that people can feel secure. I don't know if there are any policies in place that patients can even ask, but I think that it behooves patients to take responsibility for their health care as well as their health care records; to pay attention to what kind of system is in place; to not be shy and to ask if their records are being backed up off-site and if there are even dual servers on the site, to feel secure that their important information is being maintained.

It really shouldn't be resting on the doctors, who have enough on their plate in terms of their education, in terms of constantly learning about new procedures and new medications and new side effects. It really shouldn't have been left up to the doctors in Ontario to navigate the field of computers as well. I think that a lot of them have done it and have done it well. Others have paid for systems and trashed them and then bought other systems.

It's really unfortunate that, right now, we don't have a system in place where a patient can go to one hospital and say, "Oh, I had an X-ray at another hospital last week" and that emergency room physician is, right now, able to recall that record. I believe it's only pediatric hospitals that are able to access each other's records, because they were able to develop a system within pediatric hospitals, because I guess there were so many incredibly unfortunate incidents that happened where they weren't able to access information quickly.

We have stories of people getting in their car in downtown Toronto, in the horrendous traffic, as we saw this morning on the Gardiner, and having to physically drive, with CDs of X-rays and other tests, to their specialist's office because there was no way for the doctors to be able to access that information electronically, even though they have all the computers and the Internet and

everything they need in their office. There isn't a coordinated system in place.

This government promised to deliver and failed miserably. Really, I don't want to suggest that patients are sick because of it, but I believe that the entire province's health care system is a sick patient because of the failed eHealth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the member from Thornhill. She gave some very tangible, real experiences of electronic health records.

I think when this story first came out in 2009, when the Auditor General looked at eHealth Ontario following the exposure of inappropriate expenses and billings by consultants, it was in the media. People heard it, but over the years—because this is a long time ago; it's 2014 and this happened in 2009—people lost what it actually meant. This was a very, very serious breach of trust on the eHealth file. I think that when people think about eHealth, it has just become lumped in there with Ornge and chemo drugs. There are any number of issues that you can lump in there. But it's actually a very serious issue. Just to refrain, what happened was a culture that lacked transparency and accountability to Ontarians and a government that was all too happy to ignore the problems.

That Bill 78 has been called today I find amazing, because this was originally called in 2013. There were three speakers to it at the time. We have not seen it for almost a year and a half now, so it's amazing that, in a budget week, we are going to be debating this very important issue.

I just want to remind people, though, that the auditor found that about \$1 billion was wasted, in that we continue to not have an electronic health system. You know what's also really amazing is that \$1 billion seems to be the magic number for this week. It's the \$1-billion week, because \$1 billion was announced last week, almost. Almost a full \$1 billion was announced in Waterloo region last week. My colleague from Kenora—Rainy River has \$1 billion for the Ring of Fire. It is the \$1-billion week here at Queen's Park. So everybody get ready for budget day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in my place today to talk about Bill 78, the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act. This has been, across our country, a huge undertaking to get eHealth for all patients. I'm glad to say that it's going well in Ontario. By 2015, which was the targeted date, all Ontarians will have electronic medical records.

We've heard from the member from Thornhill about how good the doctors are and the hospitals are. I have to say, I agree that our health system delivers for the patients and for the people of Ontario. It delivers an excellent service.

In 2003, when I was elected, half of the calls to my office—and maybe that's an exaggeration, but it's not too much of one. The major calls were, "How do I get a doctor?" That has all changed over the years.

eHealth is something that we've had reports on to public accounts over the years, and we've had good reports on the progress of eHealth. It's not easy. It's a very complex thing to undertake. You're dealing with so many individual businesses, if you call doctors' offices businesses, etc.

It could have been done better. It could have been done better in all provinces of Canada. I know we got expertise from Alberta when we were doing ours.

We've made a lot of headway. It's just about completed, and 2015 is the right time. One billion lab test results for 9.5 million Ontarians are on the system. It's a huge, huge system. It's coming along fine. We need this legislation in order to protect those records and do other things with those records.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It was impressive to have the minister—the minister potentially in the future, I suppose—the member from Thornhill, who is a regulated health professional, speak to Bill 78 on this issue in such an informed manner. I mean that respectfully to all members of the House, because she spoke with knowledge and insight into an issue that is complicated in terms of the privacy issues as well as the efficiency issues. That's the conflicting aspect of Bill 78.

1720

The evidence is in, clearly, that this government has squandered millions and billions of dollars on eHealth. To this point in time, we're still a long way from any consensus of having a system that's modern, compatible with Canada Health Infoway, the federal system, or any other system. She spoke to it, I think, in a very practical manner as well, with her own clinical practice, of the load that's already on our physicians and the conflict—even this morning, in the clippings, with the OMA's position on the need to modernize the health delivery system.

She knows of what she speaks. She spoke about it with knowledge and compassion—not so much of the politics, and I give her credit. As a professional, you want the system to be better. I know our leader, Tim Hudak, wants it to be better. Today, the evidence is that after 10 years it's worse. We're spending more and getting less. We're not even adequately funding the drug system for people who have idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, as just one example.

I don't want to appeal for this on that emotional level so much as the factual level. I hope to have a few minutes speaking on this sometime this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to preface my remarks by congratulating the member from Thornhill, because this has been a very difficult time, especially for

a relatively new member, to have a bill which we thought was buried in the archives somewhere, because it was introduced two years ago, it had its first couple of speakers last October and then suddenly, today, is the third bill introduced in an afternoon. Who could possibly have foreseen that this was now on the government agenda? For her to be able to stand up and speak off the cuff as the first speaker is really quite phenomenal.

And I thank her: You can see her health background coming to the fore. She is able to understand the purport of the bill, what is contained within the bill, and speak quite knowledgeably, given the very limited time frame, obviously, to do any research on it at all. As all of us were scrambling, she was actually up there speaking, and I commend her for that.

This is a bill which one would have thought would have had much more prominence and would have come to the fore much earlier than this, given that the government announced some time ago that 2015 is the year that they intend to fully implement eHealth. Here we are in 2014, and nothing has been done with this bill for quite some number—it's been at least seven months since the first couple of speakers stood up and spoke about it, to be again resurrected today.

We have some difficulty understanding why the government is going down this particular road at this particular time, but the member from Thornhill was able to utilize the 20 minutes given to her quite well. She talked about eHealth records, talked about Alberta and her son, talked about those things which she feels are important. To that, I can only say—because I was critical the last time you spoke—that today, on this one, you did a good job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired for questions and comments.

We return to the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to say that when I had decided to go with the company and IT team to implement electronic health records in our office, they asked to interview me for sort of a promotional video that they were doing. They asked me what my greatest concern was in terms of going ahead with ordering the eHealth for our office, and I said, "Well, my greatest concern is that my marriage should survive this project." So whenever I communicate with them, they say they're still laughing about that among themselves.

My marriage did survive, I'm happy to report, but it was just barely there for those first six months.

It seems like sometimes people in government unfortunately think that if you throw money at a problem, you're going to have a solution. I can tell you that's not the case. It's disappointing. A lot of money was spent with no results. Initially, somebody must have known that things weren't going very well, because all they had to do was bring in some physicians and say, "Okay. This is the road we're taking. What do you think?" For absolutely no cost at all, the physicians are happy to share their impression of what kind of electronic health care

system is needed for the physicians, hospitals and government to communicate.

I'm reminded that last week it was in the news that the former health minister, who I believe is responsible for the wasted money at eHealth—a billion dollars was spent and I believe that close to that was completely wasted—has applied to grow what I'm assuming is medical marijuana, but to have some kind of marijuana farm. I think it's a little bit humorous to consider that.

But I just want to remind everybody that this is such an important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure and perhaps an onerous challenge to follow the member from Thornhill with respect to details involved in discussing Bill 78.

It has been said by many—and let's put in this context for the viewer at home—that this is important. It's important to our side and I believe to all sides to modernize the health system. I say that because this bill has not been debated or called. The actual last person to speak on this was the NDP on November 20, 2013. There have been discussions on this in 2013, on the 10th of October, by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham as well, representing partially the government's position on this.

Now I will say, with the sequence of events today, that there are a number of bills that have been called. I look back at the history of our input from our critic, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who I have the greatest respect for. I believe the House itself recognizes that today she would have loved to have been here, had she known. As a courtesy, normally, the critics are advised or informed through the House procedures that they would be calling a bill that is so important to Ontario.

Now, the member from Thornhill laid out pretty much a lot of the mechanics behind this and how important it is for two reasons: the health privacy issue as well as the health efficiency issue. There are a couple of articles that I'd like to make sure that I hear third party comments on. I have a couple here.

Here's one today—this is not any party's position; this is the headline today from the Toronto Sun, April 28, page 20. It says, "Health System Can Be 'Better.'"

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, this isn't some political person, as the minister without portfolio is saying. This is from the new president of the OMA, who said on Sunday "to begin dismantling the walls that block our health system from being the best it can be." That's an important statement, to modernize the system. We agree with that. That has been our position for some time. The government has had several attempts at talking to this issue and had many attempts of doing nothing about the issue.

I have to put this in context here because I had the privilege many years ago, when I believe Elizabeth Witmer was the Minister of Health, then Tony Clement—in fact, I believe it was Elizabeth Witmer, when she was the Minister of Health. We had a bill on health privacy at

that time and it was the OMA that sort of backed away from it at the last minute, and the bill was pulled.

I would say this: They've had about 10 years and I think perhaps as much as \$2 billion in spending to build the electronic health system. How have they done?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Very well.

Mr. John O'Toole: By any reports, very poorly.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, no, no. Talk to your doctors. Talk to your hospitals.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. You'll have your turn. I'd encourage the ministers over there to use their time effectively to speak to this.

Here's the real issue: On this issue, the government has been unable to—well, look, the last time they talked about Bill 78 was in 2013, long before Christmas, and now they're bringing it up at the 23rd hour of the day's activity here today.

Our member from Whitby–Oshawa, in her remarks, said a few things. "The acts that are affected by Bill 78 are the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act." Those most affected by Bill 78 were part of the bill that we just—we're waiting for the report on the dispensing of chemotherapy drugs.

1730

That's just one example of a government with a major program; they finally had to admit that there was a fault in the system of health care on the dispensing of diluted chemo drugs, found by a person in the system, I think at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, who found that there was a diluted drug.

The oversight from the minister—I shouldn't say this, but she left, I think because she's afraid to hear the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I made a reference that she isn't here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

I want to read the next comment here. These are not things that I'm making up; these are relevant comments made by—in this case, it turns out it's the Globe and Mail, which is a reasonably neutral paper. The headline, for the readers at home who want to look into the article: "Don't Cross Canada's Health-Care Ayatollahs"—the Ayatollah Khomeini, remember him? Don't cross the system.

They go on to say that there are ways to improve the health care system. "This time, they want Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to shut down a pilot project at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital that aims to treat fewer than 10 foreign patients a year...."

There is no attempt to modernize the system. This actually goes on to say, why not use some of the vacant OR time? I kind of agree with making use of the full capital investment; not playing games about what specialists get how much OR time is the case in this particu-

lar article. Why not use some of the OR time to shorten the wait-lists, which we know are growing?

If I go back to the comments made—I'm quickly trying to prepare myself here—on the whole issue of health privacy, the privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, has spoken on this a few times. Now, privacy is a very complex part of this thing. Consent is the first definition you need to deal with to establish the rules around health privacy, the electronic health record, which is very important.

Now, the federal government, I believe, should have the primacy in this case. The reason is because it's a pan-Canadian problem. If I'm in an automobile accident or some other event when I'm in Nova Scotia or I'm in the Northwest Territories or I'm in BC, I want the attending physician in the emergency room to know that I'm allergic to penicillin or whatever the condition is that they need to know about. There needs to be a pan-Canadian solution.

The federal system already has an integrated health system. It's called the Canada Health Infoway system. We also have in Toronto the children's health information system. There are already systems out there. Why did Ontario—I think they used it primarily to delay, deny and dither; lack of leadership, a lack of ability to make decisions, to make change.

It's difficult when you start tinkering with the health care system, but it takes courage and a vision, and that's what is sorely missing. Every time I hear of a young person dying unnecessarily or, in my case, constituents dying without access to the appropriate medication—this is what the system has amounted to today.

Now, I see some members on the other side. This is a report prior to the last election. The people of Ontario should get a hold of this. This is the Auditor General's Review of the 2011 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances. There are a couple of important things here. The viewers of Ontario should know this. This is the secret plan published by the Auditor General. Here's what's happening in Ontario: The actual average growth in health care from 2003-04 to 2011 has been 7.1% per year. To match the Kathleen Wynne-Dalton McGuinty government's commitment to balance the budget by 2017-18, they have to change the growth in health care to 3.6% a year. That's a 50% cut in health care.

We're seeing it in our hospitals—

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's a 50% cut in the increase of health care.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, they're all applauding. They know the plan. They're cutting health care in your home, in your community, at your hospital by 50%. They call it living at home—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. Point of order. Yes.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I believe in facts. If the increase was 7% and now it's 3.5%, it's not a 50% decrease. It's a 50% decrease in the increase, not 50% of

the whole program. The member should get his facts correct.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member, take under advisement the information. Carry on.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I'm just saying that they're reducing the funding to health care on an annualized basis by 50%.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, you should actually pay attention.

Now we've got the new Minister of Municipal Affairs, who's really still wet behind the ears, so he's fine.

But here's the key. I would only say that the government itself—when they are looking at the state of health care today, the citizens of Ontario should recognize that Bill 78 is the result of a failed system on dispensing of medications in Ontario. As our critic, Christine Elliott, said, "A functioning electronic health record could go a long way toward eliminating patient death through toxic drug interactions...." That's just one example that she has cited that would improve the outcomes for Ontarians in the health care system.

Even if we're prepared to ignore the human costs of not having an electronic health record, it is hard to ignore the economic costs. Diagnostic testing and double procedures need to be repeated as a result of the lack of sharing of data and information between attending physicians. There are estimates that it's in excess of \$1 billion, approaching \$2 billion, on an annualized basis.

Bill 78 deals with the protection of personal health information. Now, it's important to know what that health information is or should be. The real issue is the transition between the current handwritten physicians' records and an electronic and digitalized version.

From the patient's perspective, it's whether it's informed consent—in other words, they have given consent to their physician, who has told them that this could be used for baseline health studies; it could be used for all sorts of outcomes at the end, in the future. This data on how many people are taking Crestor or Lipitor, and all these heart medications etc., as people age—pharmaceutical companies will buy this data to give them a baseline study of the outcomes of certain types of medications and dosages. I think that informed consent to be on the health record is important.

The other one is implied consent. Implied consent would be in the case when you're on a stretcher in the ER and you need to have some sort of infusion of medication or whatever. It's implied that you want to survive the car accident or whatever you've been in, and so there's a provision of implied consent.

Then there is denied consent. In other words, you don't want to be part of any of the above. You take it as it goes. That needs to be part of an education plan. Have we heard anything about it over the last 10 years? Not much.

I think the government, when I look at the bill—last time debated: November 2013. I look at today, and it's the third hour of the third day of the last month kind of

thing before the budget. I think it's just another stall mechanism that says that we're talking about it. They're talking about it; they're doing nothing about it. They've squandered money. Even the auditor's reports themselves have indicated there have been billions of dollars wasted.

I'm so disappointed. If you look back further to the real history of this, it was back in 2008 that the Legislature of Ontario—there was a report, an article on the history of the health information and privacy legislation, written by Andrea Anna Guerin and Christian David Fortin in 2008, that said this about the work of the Krever commission—we remember the tainted blood scandal: “The Krever report identified for the first time the discrepancies in the practices of healthcare institutions, health care professionals and the ambiguity in the legislation governing privacy and health information. It also recognized that the implementation of legislation to provide a universal provincial framework for privacy and health information should not be so cumbersome to impede the effective and timely delivery of health care.”

They have taken 10 years. The judgment in the people of Ontario is to ask yourself, how are they doing? We had the health tax in 2003. They're spending more money, and getting very little outcome. In my own riding, two hospitals have told me that they have nurses who have been laid off recently. There are scandalous other wastes that we could go into, but it may not be directing our comments directly to Bill 78.

1740

One more example of the inefficiency and the inability to manage—the work done by the member from Newmarket–Aurora on the Ornge air ambulance fiasco. There's another scandal that's still before the courts. I think there's an OPP investigation: millions and millions and millions of health care dollars spent both legally and other ways by individuals who did not provide service to the constituents in Durham or across Ontario.

The eHealth system, to date, by any measure, after 10 years, is nothing short of a complete failure. They've made some accusations that about nine million people are connected to some of the records. The records themselves are incomplete. I would say to anyone who's questioning this: When you get into the translation of records from the handwritten reports by doctors—I would not want to be treated by some data entry person or scanned record that was being interpreted about what the dosage of my heart medication was. I have no confidence in the system they're using of the transmission of these records.

On some of the easy stuff—there are several today. The pharmacies of Ontario are generally linked. The labs—it's called OLIS, the Ontario Laboratories Information System—have been connected with hospitals; not all, but some. There are nine modules in the health information system: long-term care, the lab system, the pharmacies, doctors' offices, hospitals—I can't remember them all right now. They're not all connected; a couple of them are.

So you could say you've got nine million people connected to the system or some part of the system. But I

don't believe there's a comprehensive solution even in sight.

We've had two select committees dealing with Ornge, and we've had another one dealing with the chemotherapy mess-up. All we need is one more about some of the other mess-ups that have happened under this government's control.

The lack of access to drugs in Ontario is shameful and quite disappointing, to be honest. I understand that these things cost.

They say they're doing everything—in fact, by any measure, they're paying more and you're getting less. Even the auditor gets it.

I believe that the Minister of Health has tried. I don't deny that she has tried. I believe that by not being able to answer the member from Newmarket–Aurora on several occasions, where she said she was doing this and further investigation has proven she is not—I don't think we've gotten to the bottom of that. We don't have either report from those two select committees: the one dealing with the chemotherapy issue, or the Ornge medical evacuation helicopter system. Neither report is public. I'm thinking, by some measure of procedure or delay, these are being set aside because of the impending election in the province of Ontario.

If the people of Ontario only knew—they do know. You're paying more and you're getting less.

By any measure, the lineups, almost all the chronic diseases—we have a plan. There are no more long-term-care homes—finished. They're not building any more. But they have a new plan called Aging at Home. It really means aging alone. In my riding, you cannot get enough home care to support someone who needs care in the morning, to get up and be prepared for the day, and to be put to bed at night. You're allowed two hours a day, seven days a week—that's 14 hours. I think you're allowed about 12 hours of care per day—completely inadequate. We know, ourselves, that there are waiting lists—I think it's two and three years for people to get into long-term-care facilities in Ontario.

I don't like looking backward so much but, at the same time, in our term in government, we created 20,000 new long-term-care beds. We saw the tsunami coming. They have seen the tsunami coming. What have they done on it? Nothing.

If you listen to them from now on, you will get what you deserve: You'll get a government that will say anything to maintain power. That's what I hear every day in question period: saying whatever they need to say to actually move the polls and move people to the polling stations in their favour.

But I say that this Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records, is important, first. I think the debate by the NDP as well as the opposition side needs to be more fulsome. I would encourage the government to bring the bill forward to have further comments by other members and their experience, as we did today, more recently, from the member from Thornhill. I believe that she adds a lot to the

debate—and mine is a serious case of ranting on it, but I look at the LHINs and the other expenditures in health care as creating more bureaucracy and less care. It's as simple as that. I have no confidence that they even mean to do what's in the bill.

Thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: What amazes me when we're debating this bill is that it has been, what, 10 years since eHealth was proposed, and this electronic eHealth care system was supposed to make everything smoother, more efficient, and have information so that patients could get better care. This Liberal government has let the people of Ontario down again. In letting them down, they've spent a billion dollars, wasting taxpayers' precious tax dollars on systems that haven't done the job as of yet. Truly, they must really have to say to themselves when enough is enough, when they're going to start something and not carry it through successfully to the end, having to spend constantly and waste money on debacle bills—or even gas plants, for that matter; \$1.1 billion on gas plants. A billion dollars on eHealth, and we're still waiting for a system that's actually going to serve the patients of Ontario.

The other piece of this is I'm surprised that we're still, 10 years later, debating this bill, and the government hasn't put up any speakers. Let's hear why this bill is so important to you. Is it because of your failure that you don't want to speak to it? Do you want to sit back and let us do all the work for you? But you know what? It's high time that this government took responsibility for the failures in the gas plants and especially in eHealth, and not hide behind—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Time to move the bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, we have been in this House today and we've had a lot of juggling of bills today. I don't know what's behind it, but I think that if they want to debate the bill, they should get up and speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's very unfortunate that we hear all of these comments from the opposition party when—let's talk about when they were in power and there was no eHealth. Let's talk about what would happen. If you received a patient and you wanted to see if she was allergic to something or whatever, you had to call the supervisor. The supervisor would go down to try to get the files and then could not get the files; or the way that the doctor had written a prescription, you didn't understand it and all of this. Now, thank God, we have an electronic health record. Listening to them, there is no electronic health record.

Hello? There are nine million Ontarians—I'm one of them—who have electronic health records. These electronic health records—69% of primary care physicians and almost 52% of specialists in communities now use electronic medical records. Over 190,000 people benefit

from the electronic medical records in community health centres. All Ontarians will have these electronic medical records by 2015.

Right now, the medication history of all Ontario seniors is accessible in all hospitals and emergency rooms, and I can tell you as a health professional, this is welcome. Nurses and doctors—it's strange, because it seems like nobody wants it, but I have doctors calling my office on a regular basis, saying, "We wanted to have electronic medical records. We wanted to ensure that"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments? The member from Grey-Owen Sound.

1750

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Durham. He always comes prepared. He knows what he talks about. He's been here a long time to see these boondoggles unfortunately happen under the Liberal watch.

The minister just spoke about nine million people having coverage, and our esteemed colleague from Thornhill is in the health care profession. She can speak with credibility and with truth. She's telling me that the docs paid for most of the program, and the funding that the government has put into this so far doesn't even cover their software updates, let alone all of the infrastructure and the actual cost of the software and the hardware.

Madam Speaker, this is one of those things again. This was the first, I believe, billion-dollar boondoggle under this Liberal government reign of terror, of failure, and we continue to see it. We see Ornge, eHealth—we see Ornge being a boondoggle. We see the gas plants being a boondoggle. We see all of this waste. I would ask the party on the opposite side of the House, what is their record here today in 2014? Where is this electronic record?

They made a decision a long time ago about LHINs, and they followed the west. Alberta was already getting out of it, because they realized that they had made a mistake and they were changing track. They actually implemented an electronic health record which is working very, very well, but this government chose not to follow them on that.

It's an aspirational goal. It's an aspirational bill, again, to try to sound good in a 30-second sound bite, that we're going to fix the world with an electronic health care record. It's just not true.

I think my colleague from Durham hit it truly on the head when he started talking about the cuts that we're going to see: 50% of a cut to health care to the people watching at home, to the people out in your community and my community who aren't going to have the health care services.

It reminds me: Markdale, in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, was promised by this Liberal government 10 years ago to fund a hospital. The community rallied and raised \$12 million that sits in the bank today doing nothing for the people of our great riding.

Again, this waste from them with eHealth, with the boondoggles from the LHINS, with the boondoggles from the gas plants—they're running us into the ground, Madam Speaker. The people at the end of day who need these services are the ones paying the price.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to actually talk to the bill, because it's important. First of all, I do want to say that, while it's surprising that Bill 78 is before us as the third piece of legislation today and this afternoon, I think the member from Durham made a very good point around the privacy piece.

This is an important piece of legislation, because a lot went wrong with the eHealth file; a lot went wrong in the Ministry of Health. But we are going to be supporting the legislation in second reading. However, we want to see extensive committee hearings and an explanation from this government on the many questions that we have already raised. There are serious gaps with the way that Bill 78 is constructed, which—at least I can say the Liberals are consistent.

We would also like to hear a willingness from the government to address the inadequacies that are currently present in the legislation, as has already been pointed out by some of the members. It is important to ensure a strong system of privacy when it comes to personal health information, and this should be a priority for all Ontarians. This remains a serious issue.

I have a family member currently in hospital in Peterborough. His electronic files are actually something that protect him going forward, because he cannot advocate for himself. So it is so important to not have an opt-out on it. This is a serious piece—a doctor can't choose to eliminate a piece of information that should be in that electronic file. It is a matter of patient safety.

Quite honestly, when the Auditor General came out and looked at eHealth Ontario back in 2009, following the exposure of inappropriate expenses and billings by consultants, we lost faith in this process, as we should have. There are still many outstanding questions with the eHealth file. It's just amazing to me that it has come forward in this budget week. It is a huge black mark on the history of the Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate the member from London–Fanshawe, the Attorney General, our own PC critic as well and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I actually do recognize the importance of this. I would say, on our behalf, that we support a modern health care system. I'd say even the articles I cited earlier indicate the government is paralyzed with this file. In fact, they're saying no more frequently than yes.

If I can just pick up on the more recent comments, I'd say that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has it pretty correct. She was looking at it from the perspective of the consumer. When she said that she has a family member in a situation in Peterborough, at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, I gather—and the provisions of opting out. They haven't even solved the philosophical differences of this bill. I think arguments can be made about the opting-out provision in health privacy. A person may have certain types of issues in their life, their past life that they don't want divulged, and I think the actual client, the patient, the citizen's rights always exceed the institutional needs. That's important. "Do not resuscitate," or some medication you might be on—I think that's paramount.

I agree with your conclusion that there should be extensive hearings. The real truth of this, Madam Speaker, is this: At the 23rd hour of a day, in a legislative sense, this bill is as dead as a duck. Do you understand? Here's the reason why. That's part of the plan. They haven't discussed it for about a year and now they're discussing it in second reading. We're all implying it should go to committee. The only committee this is going to be—it's going to be called an election. This all comes down—to the people of Ontario, I'm addressing you—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Only if you want an election.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. This election is about trust. It's a matter of trust.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. There's a matter of trust here—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
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**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

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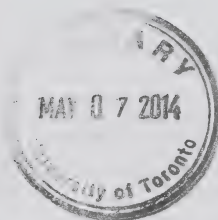
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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 April 2014

Mardi 29 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:
Bill 151, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to get up and speak about Bill 151, Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2014. Obviously, this is, quite honestly, a very political bill. It consists of five complementary, unrelated housekeeping changes of the sort that usually appear, quite honestly, as minor schedules in a budget bill. There is some question also about the effectiveness of these changes. I'm looking at some of the government members, and I think that they probably have some thoughts on this as well. These are housekeeping measures that are simply a function of new developments, rendering legislative language obsolete.

You must wonder, actually, in this day and age, in this time, how it would be, with all of the issues that are facing this province today, with all of the issues that are facing the economy, the health care system, long-term-care facilities, the education system—just yesterday we heard that there was a report from People for Education which cites a disturbing trend of special-needs children being sent home because they don't have the resources to deal with some of the complex needs that are facing our education system every single day.

There is, of course, the dreaded gas plant issue. Just this morning, your own Minister of Transportation is facing the gas plant committee—and it should be a very interesting session, I would imagine; I'm sure that they'll get a word in edgewise eventually.

But in the grand scheme of things, where we are right now in the province of Ontario, there is obviously a lack of trust and there is a level of cynicism that exists in the broader public of the province of Ontario.

Schedule 1 of this piece of legislation amends the Courts of Justice Act “to add proceedings under the Civil Marriage Act (Canada) to the list of proceedings that are within the jurisdiction of the Family Court. The schedule is also amended to permit additional family law proceedings to be added to the Family Court’s jurisdiction by regulation.”

Schedule 2 of this bill deals with “the provisions of the Pension Benefits Act dealing with joint and survivor pensions and pre-retirement death benefits.... The amendments relate to how the definition of ‘spouse’ in subsection 1(1) of the act applies in those provisions for the purpose of determining eligibility for benefits....

“Amendments are made to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004”—this is a small piece of the act in the grand scheme of things and where we are with regard to health care—“to protect the directors, officers, members, employees and agents of the Ontario Medical Association from civil liability for their good faith actions in negotiations with the government of Ontario concerning insured services and physician payments.”

Just yesterday, for some reason, Bill 78 was up on the order paper, which dealt with the eHealth issue dating back from 2009, when the auditor came forward and said that there was a complete and utter lack of transparency and accountability with regard to the way the contracts were distributed and honoured and processed by the government with regard to the electronic health file. It's a strange issue to bring forward during budget week, when you're bringing forward, I think—and I think the people of this province actually think—one of the major black marks in a long history with this government. Actually, I think it was one of the first scandals that came through this House, and so it is strange that, as a whole, the government would be bringing forward, in a very pivotal week for the province of Ontario, an issue that has such negative ramifications for them. It actually gave the opposition, I think, a very good opportunity to go through some of our concerns with regard to Bill 78.

Bill 151, though, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, has:

“The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act is amended by adding two substantive sections, section 15 dealing with the collection and use of personal information and section 16 dealing with Ontario education numbers.”

There is a lot of work that needs to be done, actually, on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, and of course every day we do talk about the importance of post-secondary education, the importance of

access to post-secondary education. This small part, essentially housekeeping changes that usually appear in minor schedules, is in a major budget bill. It does leave more questions than answers, this piece of legislation in particular.

The schedule also creates a stretcher transportation services section of the Highway Traffic Act. I have to say that again: This schedule creates a stretcher transportation services section of the Highway Traffic Act. Under this section, ambulances “must contain prescribed equipment and meet prescribed inspection and maintenance standards. They must be equipped with communication equipment to allow contact with ambulance, police or fire department emergency services.”

So you see, in schedules 1 and 2 there are minor changes to the medicare act, minor changes to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, and then you throw in some sort of rule about having stretchers and equipment in ambulances. All of this is contained within Bill 151, and it does leave more questions. I mean, the Clerks must be saying, “Who writes legislation like this?” And I know that the Liberal government has, on the whole, a very poor record of creating legislation that is effective. We’ve seen that over and over and over again. Certainly it begs the question: Why is Bill 151 before us at this time in the history of the province?

Each and every day, we have an opportunity to look at the finances in the province, and that is our job collectively as the opposition parties. We’ve seen that the projections for the deficit reduction are way off mark. We have seen job strategies that can barely be called job strategies.

Just in my riding last week, there was almost \$1 billion worth of funding announcements, which—I mean, if you’ve got it, great. And then the member from Kenora—Rainy River got \$1 billion yesterday, too. In my riding, we had over \$800 million announced with regard to developmental services for those adults who need resources, need support as they transition into the community, and as their parents age—because they’re aging and they can’t take care of their high-needs children. This is a long-standing promise, though, from this government. For them to come into the Waterloo region last week and make this grand announcement that this money will flow, when it was supposed to have been flowing almost four years ago—I myself have been working with a wonderful group of parents in my riding, three mothers, and they’ve actually bought their own group home. They’ve just given up altogether on any hope of getting any resources. So they joined together, they pooled their resources, they bought their own group home, under the promise that this government was going to provide some respite for them, for their boys, who are adult sons with autism, and they’re high, high needs. This announcement came last week, and in many respects it’s quite emotionally manipulative. It really is. It’s holding out that carrot, a little bit of hope after 12 years.

0910

And then of course there was the announcement that we’re finally getting the last part of the cancer care centre

in Kitchener–Waterloo. Then there was of course the \$120-million announcement for OpenText, one of the most successful software companies in Canada, and the promise of 1,200 jobs.

Missing in that whole equation, though, is the transportation, the transit file. It’s unfortunate that the Minister of Transportation is in front of the gas plant committee this morning, because it’s the missing link. It is a major job creator. The promise of two-way all-day GO to Kitchener–Waterloo is something that the people of my region are starting to lose faith in, especially when the Premier does come to the riding and promises two-way all-day, except she forgets that two-way all-day means that people from Toronto can get to Kitchener–Waterloo. Almost 10,000 people commute every day to Kitchener–Waterloo. There are good jobs there. The start-up community has done a wonderful job in trying to make sure that those young entrepreneurs, who have quite honestly lost hope in the broader scheme of this province’s economy—they’re not looking for those jobs anymore. They’ve just decided, “You know what? We’re going to create our own jobs. We’re going to create our own economy.”

I will say, though, that the \$5 million that did flow to agencies or organizations like Communitech was really well spent, because it fostered almost 1,000 start-ups in our region. I think that we do need to have a look at that \$120 million: Where are the strings? Where is the accountability?

Of course, we have a very different vision for the economy. New Democrats think that accountability with regard to dollars spent around job creation is incredibly important. We favour targeted tax credits, so if you do create a job—and I know that OpenText is going to create jobs. In fact, they have created jobs, because they’re a mature, successful company with a strong business plan. They would get tax credits for creating those jobs. This has proven to be very effective in other jurisdictions, and for some reason the government has chosen—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That’s not true and you know it.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, it has, actually. This government has not even chosen to engage in that conversation, because I think they sometimes think that it’s still a minor majority.

We, of course, favour tax credits for innovation, which obviously is a connection piece for the manufacturing economy, to ensure that we start making stuff in the province of Ontario. But that means you need to commercialize research and you need to get those ideas onto plant floors, because this province has the ability to capitalize on the knowledge economy. Yet here we are not honouring tax credits, not even talking about supporting those researchers who are often connected to training and universities, and they’d love to see some sort of uptake on the commercialization of research to create jobs. They would love to be part of that equation. They would love to be part of that conversation. Obviously, this government is very good at the conversation piece.

Job creator tax credits, the innovation research tax credits, capital so that when companies invest in buildings and structures which hold jobs here to the economy—I think that actually makes a lot of sense, and they're looking for that kind of assistance; they've told us. Small and medium-sized businesses are asking us for support, and they want to know what the playing field is like. They want to know what their role is in this economy, and they want to know how the government is going to play their cards as well—so the job creator tax credit, the research innovation tax credit, capital investment, and then of course training and retraining.

So here we are, talking about 151, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. Quite honestly, there's very little interest in this piece of legislation. Of course, you have to support it; it's housekeeping. This is something that should just come before us as a matter of rote. It's an administrative bill, yet you have this nice name: Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2014.

It does lend itself to question what is happening in this place. I know, having spent last week in the constituency and knocking on some doors, people—of course, they would love to see schedule 1 amended in the Courts of Justice Act. That's a top priority for them, Madam Speaker.

You know what they're concerned about? They're concerned about their hydro rates. I knocked on a door last week and there's a mother with a family of six, because her parents are living with them, and she's doing laundry every hour and a half throughout the night because she's trying to save money, because it is a huge cost to them in their household budget. They quite honestly are looking at this place and the people who come here each and every day and they're wondering what we are doing here. If I were to go back—and clearly she was up all night, so she's not watching—but if I was to go back to her and say, “This is what I talked about in the House this week: amending the Courts of Justice Act to add proceedings under the Civil Marriage Act to the list of proceedings that are within the jurisdiction of the Family Court”—first of all, I'd have to explain everything that this actually would mean. But again, it's not a priority.

Schedule 2—this is another thing that I was talking about—deals with the “provisions of Pension Benefits Act dealing with joint and survivor pensions and pre-retirement death benefits ... determining eligibility for benefits.” In the broader context of pensions in the province of Ontario, this is something that obviously could be dealt with very simply. It shouldn't be a huge debate issue in the House today. And if I told her that we're also going to be talking about, “Amendments are made to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004, to protect the directors, officers, members, employees ... concerning insured services and physician payments”—if I were to tell her this, she would say, “What are you talking about? Why is this a priority?”

Do you know what she's concerned about? She's concerned about finding quality child care in the province of

Ontario. She's concerned about the safety of children in unlicensed private child care centres. She's concerned about her child going into the education system and making sure that they have resources for special education, because this is the big thing that parents have finally realized, and I hope the government realizes it one day: when you have five children in a class of 21, and they have special needs, and you have a teacher who doesn't have an educational assistant or resources to deal with those five children, it affects the entire classroom. It affects the entire quality of that education system, because those five children deserve the attention and they deserve the resources and they deserve an opportunity to be successful, but so do the other children in that classroom. That's what people are concerned about.

I do think that the people of this province realize sometimes what is going on here, that you can bring a piece of legislation called Strengthening and Improving Government Act, and in a very simple way I can explain to the people of this province that the government has many issues, and there are pressing issues that we should be talking about each and every day in this place, yet here we are talking about making sure that ambulances have stretcher transportation services under the highway act. It really does leave a huge question of confidence in this government, quite honestly.

Clearly we've seen—even yesterday afternoon we saw three pieces of legislation cycle through this House: the family care act, which, unbelievably, the government got up and said, “Why are you delaying this? Why are you delaying this?” And then they deferred the vote when obviously everybody in this place is going to be supportive of it. We dealt with the eHealth file, Bill 78, which is incredible. I've already talked at length about that. It just leaves the question of who was running the show?

0920

I know that you have serious issues of trust. The people of this province have huge questions about competency, and they see the announcements. They see the electioneering that happened last week. They see the dollars: It was the \$1-billion week last week in the province of Ontario. In my riding, \$1 billion was announced, and \$1 billion was announced in Kenora–Rainy River. There is money flowing out of this place, and the people of this province understand that you don't have it. But they also know that it's their money, and you are spending it; you're making promises to spend it under certain conditions. As I said, I find it incredibly, incredibly manipulative.

The entire objective of this legislation, Bill 151—these are rational amendments to various pieces of legislation. Here we are at second reading, and from a priority perspective, it does leave one shaking one's head. These are housekeeping measures that are simply a function of new developments rendering legislative language obsolete. For example, the changes to the Pension Benefits Act are required because of a court decision that muddled the waters somewhat on survivor benefits.

I was having lunch with some lovely ladies yesterday, and they were talking about the way regulation actually

cycles through this place. They were wondering about the layers—because we did see that the regulations book is now 3,500 pages long. So we're really good at creating new legislation and regulations, but we're not very good at throwing out the old stuff, at having a fresh look at how to do things in this place. Of course, there have been pieces of legislation which promise to cycle through one reg every year per ministry. I think we should set the bar a little bit higher. I understand why the government would want to set the bar really low: so they can say that they overachieved. I think that's the language that we hear so often.

Today in this House, there is a great number of issues, from the energy file to the health file to jobs and the economy, and we've seen very little action on these issues. We've seen lots of announcements outside of this place. To date, we still have no comprehensive jobs strategy from this government.

Last week, I was in the riding. People are getting frustrated; they really are. They are frustrated by the lack of progress. They see that a minority government can be good for them. I will say that, Madam Speaker: They recognize that in a minority setting, there is a possibility of putting people first.

I think actually that we were able to do that very well in the first budget session and the second budget session. I'm not sure why the PC caucus has chosen not to read budgets before they say no to them. I think they've probably done that again this time. When you read through budgets, you actually have an opportunity to strengthen them and to make them more effective. In the first budget session, we were able to increase the fairness tax: 2% for those people who make over \$500,000. That generates almost \$470 million a year.

Mr. Mike Colle: Tax the rich.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a fairness tax. You agreed to it; thanks very much.

Then we also were able to secure some stability funding for the transition of child care. We negotiated that with the government. We actually made them do what they said they were going to do, which is a new position for us. That funding actually became annualized.

Just as a little refresher course for the government: The instability of child care in the province of Ontario happened because they implemented the full-day kindergarten program without thinking of the negative impacts that it would have on the child care sector, which was already fragile, which was already vulnerable, because there was no comprehensive vision for child care in the province of Ontario—that despite the fact that when you invest \$1 in the child care sector you get a return, depending on the research, of between \$3 and \$7. It is a huge economic driver, particularly for women. So when the government brought in full-day kindergarten and rolled that out in five years—of course we are supportive of FDK. We do think that it will make a difference. There are some quality issues that we've seen rectified over the years, but it's an ongoing learning challenge.

When that full-day kindergarten was brought in, the government just sort of turned their back on the child

care sector altogether, and so we negotiated that stability and that transition funding as they coped with losing the preschool children in their centres, which it was actually using to subsidize the rest of child care. I won't even get into the special-needs issue with children in child care or in FDK because it's heartbreaking. Yesterday's report from People for Education is a red flag for all of us in this House to recognize that every child—the whole principle of public education is that it levels the playing field, that it creates opportunities for everyone, despite your socio-economic background, despite the social determinants of health. What happened here is that there was a push, a political push, for FDK—fine. But then build in the supports for the rest of the system. Child care, which was already vulnerable, which was already unstable, paid the price for that program. What we did in that first budget session was ensure that there was some transition funding that at least buffered the child care sector as this government rushed through with their own agenda. So we did child care and we did ODSP in that first session.

Some people say that budgets are moral documents, that they tell the real priorities of governments. On this side of the House, we also think that when you follow the money, you follow the real priorities. When you're talking about strengthening and improving government, there should definitely be some priorities listed out in a piece of legislation like this with this great title—because you're very good at the titles and the ribbon cuttings and the announcements, as I've already said, which sort of indicate the priorities. If you're trying to be all things to all people, which you were in my riding last week and throughout the various election announcements that have happened, it seems to me that those priorities need to be very clear to the people of this province, and I think they are.

In the last budget, just one year ago, we obviously were able to bring a new lens, if you will, to the budget process in that regard. In the last budget process, we were able to make sure that there was some ultimate fairness on the insurance file. Some people, whenever I have a chance to talk to them about that file, are very interested in it because it affects their bottom line in their households each and every day, particularly for seniors who are in the Tim Hortons on Saturday morning and they're now paying more for insurance than their car is worth. They've never been in an accident, but their insurance continues to go up.

Last night, I had a really great conversation with the insurance brokers at their reception and said, "People want to see those savings come back to them, because that was what was promised. That was what was sold to them when Dwight Duncan stood up in this House and said, 'We're going to standardize those payouts, those premiums, those benefits, and those savings are going to trickle down to the consumer.'" Well, you know what? You have to hold the line on that. If someone in this House is going to get up and say that, you have to make sure that they're going to follow through. So we did negotiate that through the last budget.

We were able, obviously, to also secure a youth employment strategy. Nothing in this piece of legislation will address youth employment, but we made sure that there was some funding there and the government topped that up, and we're tracking that to make sure that those numbers that you keep talking about are real numbers.

I, myself, met with London city council yesterday with my fellow MPPs and learned that London has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the province of Ontario. They want to be part of the solution, so they came to this place, and they're willing to come to the table with some money. They want the province to partner, and they need the federal government to also partner. Congratulations to them for taking up the leadership. But youth employment was a focus for us in the budget session. We pushed the line. We pushed the agenda on that. The government had talked about it for years and years and years. Hopefully that plan is working. But we are tracking it, because obviously there are some serious trust issues that we have with this government.

0930

On the whole, though, when the government brings forward Bill 151, Strengthening and Improving Government Act, one has to wonder why this is actually before us; because there is this rumour that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I just ask that—conversations have reached a point where they are interfering with the speaker. Thank you.

You may continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

In the last budget session, just to remind you, we were able to negotiate auto insurance. We were able to bring in the youth employment issue. Of course, on the grand scheme of finances in the province of Ontario, we hoped that financial accountability would be a priority of this government, which is why we modelled the budget officer for the province. We definitely think that a Financial Accountability Officer could help all of us.

It was really interesting, because at the time, the media said to me, "Well, you know, this will be for you as well if you form government." I said, "Good." Every government has proven that they need a sober second thought or a sort of evidence-based, decision-making role from a third party, if you will.

For instance, if we had had that Financial Accountability Officer prior to the PC caucus selling the 407, they would have had some information which may have challenged the way they sold the 407, because as all of us drive on that highway—because we have to, because we must—we are paying for it. We are paying for it each and every day.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And if we had had it around before they did the OLG modernization—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, my goodness. Don't even get me started on the OLG. Although it is great that the OLG—the headline is, "OLG Reboot Slammed by Auditor General." I mean, it's just another example of where

the Liberals pushed and rushed through something. If this idea had been run by the Financial Accountability Officer, I'm fairly certain that we wouldn't be in this place. The auditor called the plan devised in 2012 "overly optimistic." Maybe if the Financial Accountability Officer could have had a look at that plan, looked through the logistics, did some long-term economic forecasting, we would have definitely seen that this plan would actually hurt the people of the province of Ontario, particularly our rural sections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Five hundred people out of work at St. Kitts and Fort Erie.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Five hundred people out of work at Fort Erie, and we saw that in the Niagara Falls by-election.

This is the thing: When you create legislation which has no teeth, which is not focused on the people who we're serving, it has a negative trickle-down effect. We have seen that time and time again.

When we look at Bill 151, Strengthening and Improving Government Act, they actually have the gall to say that Ontario is enhancing government efficiency and responsiveness. As I've already pointed out, it makes one amendment to the Highway Traffic Act to strengthen non-emergency transport services for medically stable patients—they're making sure that people have stretchers. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act would be amended to enable the government to collect information about post-secondary students' enrolment. This is something they should be able to do already—

Interjection: Right now.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —right now.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We're concerned about how far they're going to go.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Absolutely. There's always a concern about how far you go. We even heard that yesterday with Bill 78 with regard to the collection of private information of patients with eHealth. Once again, I can't see why they brought that forward. I don't know who's running the show.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Catherine, you should just contract all of this out.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It could all be contracted out. We could just sell the entire government down the river. How about that?

The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act: This is the third part of the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. This would be amended to provide representatives of the Ontario Medical Association—OMA, a great association—with immunity from legal action for acts done in good faith during negotiations with the government. It's interesting that right now—I think they're in negotiations right now with the government. The timing is just excellent, don't you think?

The fourth piece is the Pension Benefits Act, which would be amended to clarify spousal entitlements to pre- and post-retirement death benefits. Again, this is literally a housekeeping issue. This is not something that is a huge, pressing issue in the province of Ontario. It doesn't

address the unemployment rate. It doesn't address the fact that we have some serious issues in health care. I'm almost speechless.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm speechless about the stretcher transportation services piece.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know.

So you see, in this piece of legislation, these are housekeeping measures. In the broader sense of the province of Ontario, members on this side of the House—our member from Nickel Belt has been vigilant and fierce in her advocacy for change in the health care system. I know that all of us have stories that we could relay back to this place about the weaknesses and the failings in the health care system.

Last week I met with some personal support workers, and I understand that the Minister of Health is going to be making a very timely announcement again, just to be consistent, I'm sure. It could be another billion dollars or maybe just \$500 million this time, but they are certainly deserving of more, because the women I met with, who are members of SEIU, talk about the fact that they have very little money for mileage when they go from patient to patient. There are serious health and safety issues that they face, travelling from patient to patient and also dealing, unfortunately, with people who have dementia, so there are some safety concerns. This is primarily a female-dominated field. They're given 15 minutes for some serious medical issues like changing colostomy bags, for instance. The registered nurses of Ontario have said that they couldn't do their job without these incredible champions for patient health. That's what personal support workers are. They're at the bottom of the health care food chain, and I'm hoping that there can be some change. We certainly are going to be building support for them because we recognize that they are deserving of greater support.

More importantly, when you support personal support workers, you support patient care, and there's a direct correlation to that. We can talk about electronic health and we can talk about Ornge—it all comes down to people in the health care system, and if you've ever been in a hospital—I have a family member right now in the Peterborough regional hospital—it comes down to the quality of the people who are working with you. That's what our focus is.

Actually, just to return back to the whole budget discussion, that's what we've tried to bring. We've tried to bring the lens of the people of this province into the budget session, first in 2012 and then in 2013. The people of this province have responded very well to us in that regard and we know that because we've won four by-elections. I'm just getting that in there for good measure.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Four. Four out of nine.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Four. Here we are on Tuesday morning, April 29, talking about Bill 151, Strengthening and Improving Government Act, which, as I've already pointed out, is generally a housekeeping piece of legislation. It does not address the big questions, the big issues

that are facing the province of Ontario. I just think that we should be more ambitious for ourselves; we should set the bar higher for ourselves.

I know that the government is distracted and I know why they're distracted. There's everything from the gas plants issue—it's still playing itself out, and as I've already said, the Minister of Transportation is in front of that committee this morning. I'm sure that will be amusing for some people, but we don't think it's funny on this side of the House. We think it's pretty serious when you waste \$1.1 billion when there are such pressing needs in the province right now.

Yesterday was the National Day of Mourning. I attended a memorial in Kitchener-Waterloo and I can tell you that the numbers of people—I think 373 people lost their lives last year in the province of Ontario. You should not go to work in the province of Ontario in 2014 and not come home. Your shift should not be something that ends your life. We are looking for compliance and we're looking for stronger regulations. We fought this throughout the early fall, and we made sure that that fall prevention training standard actually could come into play. But you shouldn't have to shame the government into doing what they said they were going to do back in 2009. That should not be the way that this place works.

We're very disturbed by the way that legislation is coming before the House and what the government is showing to be a priority. Housekeeping bills should not be what we are talking about on April 29, 2014. It just shouldn't be that way.

0940

We are obviously seeing, though, a level of desperation, I think, in the way that these funding announcements are coming out. I understand the discomfort—I do; I really do—and I understand that there's a genuine sense of panic, a little bit, on the part of the government.

With the Ring of Fire—I was sitting up there in 2007, when Mr. Dwight Duncan stood in that place and said that the Ring of Fire is going to change the economic future of northern Ontario.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Seven years ago.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Seven years ago. Of course, I knew very little at the time about the Ring of Fire at that point, but I thought, "Well, the resources that are available to us, the resource economy in our northern jurisdictions—those people want to go to work." They want to go to work; they want to be part of the solution, as do our First Nations.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Sit down with a First Nations chief.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh yes, the First Nations who have to take you to court. The First Nations should not have to take you to court to get justice in the province of Ontario.

Mining and job creation can't happen without infrastructure. I can see that there's a level of frustration, because on almost every file there is, when you peel back the layers of this government, a level of incompetency which is shocking—especially to a new member like

myself, because I came from a different jurisdiction where there were distinct lines of accountability, there were processes and there were laws that you would follow.

Yet, here we are in the province of Ontario, waiting seven years for what should be an economic success story for our northern communities and for our First Nations, and group after group has had to take this government to court. That's where this is—where this government refuses to do the right thing the first time, which is why we are looking at this piece of legislation—Bill 151—and wondering what is in this that strengthens and improves government. Honestly, what is actually in this legislation which will strengthen and improve government?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not much.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Almost nothing. Why is it before us? That is the big question in this place today. Why is Bill 151 in front of us at this time and in this place?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There's nothing else that's important, I imagine.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, it is about priorities.

It was really sad for me—and I know that everyone feels this way—that the Milton mother who came to this place, who was only 41, couldn't get Ontario to follow three other provinces and cover Avastin, and she lost her life.

This weekend, I participated in the Ride 'n' Stride for cancer research—the research said that Avastin would prolong her life. One of the speakers this weekend said that cancer research provides hope and time, and sometimes that's the most important thing that you can give somebody.

Those are the emotional stories that come to this place. These are the human stories. She lost her life. She lost her battle with cancer. There are certain names that I have for cancer that I cannot say in this place at this time, but she came to fight for it, and she did a great job of raising the issue of how certain drugs are funded by the province of Ontario and certain drugs are not. I hope that we all share in the concern with how that happens.

Let's work together to actually fix that. I would think that that would be more important than amending the Courts of Justice Act to add proceedings under the Civil Marriage Act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Or more useful.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would think that it would be, and I would think that it would perhaps be a little more important than schedule 2, which deals with provisions of the Pension Benefits Act dealing with joint and survivor pensions and pre-retirement death benefits. These are housekeeping issues that are before us.

I guess, though, on the upside, it did give me an opportunity to talk a little bit about what we think the priorities are in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Organ donation is an important issue, too.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Absolutely. We've seen a lot of health-related issues come before this House. Health is

\$52 billion—that's the budget for health care. Clearly there is a small shift to refocusing on health and early intervention and prevention of disease, but not enough. We even see, on the file about organ donation, for example—this came before us just before the House rose; there have been very political, very high-profile stories around organ donation. This is clearly an issue that we can do better on in the province of Ontario. We were told that organ donation was up; today we hear that organ donor numbers are on the decline. Ontario posted statistics online in the hopes that data comparisons would improve the process and save more lives.

We could be talking about how to streamline the organ donation process here. It's so funny that this is in the paper today, because I was thinking about a young boy in my riding this morning who, at the age of 13, passed away. His parents were able to donate some of his organs, and it gave them some level of peace, I would say. In fact, it actually gave the entire community who were mourning with them a level of peace as well. So the potential for having organ donation take a front-and-centre conversation through a piece of legislation, which might be useful—we would welcome that opportunity to talk about the real issues in health care, around the selling of for-profit plasma, for instance.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They're being sued for that too.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They're being sued for that too.

So this is really the point: that you should make sure that when you bring forward a piece of legislation—and I hope to have this opportunity some day—you craft legislation which actually can be effective, which, when you bring it to this House, there has been some consensus on. In a minority government, we do have to listen to each other. I know it's painful for some people, and I'm sorry about that sometimes, but on the whole, though, I think that when the government brings forward a housekeeping bill the week that a major budget—I think one of the most important budgets in the province of Ontario—comes down, we would be talking about financial issues.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two-way GO train.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. Two-way GO train; reforming the OMB.

Ms. Cindy Forster: All-day.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Two-way, all-day from Niagara.

All of those transit options that have been in your bailiwick now for almost 12 years—when you had a majority government you didn't even have to deal with us. You could have done the right thing when you were a majority government. Instead, you know what you did? You did eHealth, you did Ornge and you implemented full-day kindergarten without thinking about the negative impacts that it would have on the child care sector. You spent a great deal of money fighting the people you should have been working with, like the Ring of Fire.

So here we are. These are housekeeping measures before us. We have a very different approach to this place in the third party. We recognize that it's a minority government, we recognize that we should listen to the people we are serving, that we should put their interests before

our interests as a political party and as individual politicians, and we bring a level of integrity to those conversations, I think, which is very much needed in the province of Ontario.

I understand that the government is frustrated by this debate, but you should not have brought Bill 151 and opened the door to—this is a vacuous piece of legislation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Pretty well nothing.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Pretty much. I mean, why would you bring it forward? But that is a question in the grand scheme of things in the province of Ontario, when the economy is lagging, when youth unemployment is so high, when we have some systemic issues in the health care file, when the energy file is a complete and utter mess, when we see, in education, principals having to send home the most vulnerable children because they can't have access to resources, and closing community schools, which are the hub of the community—the file goes on and on and on and on.

That begs the question—that's the word I was looking for the entire morning. That begs the question: Why would you bring Bill 151 before us and call it the Strengthening and Improving Government Act when it doesn't do that? It doesn't do that. Nobody on that side of the House can say that this strengthens government, not with a straight face. I can't even say it with a straight face.

So here we are: gas plants, eHealth, Ornge, chemotherapy drugs—

Interjection.

0950

Ms. Catherine Fife: Hey, get over to your side. Don't heckle me from the PC caucus.

Hon. Mario Sergio: You're heckling your own member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She likes it. It's interactive.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, we work together over here. I know there are some issues with regard to that over there.

So here we are: We are talking, on April 29, about the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. We're talking about some minor housekeeping issues. Our point, in the NDP caucus, is that we should be talking about the real issues that are facing the province of Ontario, and there's no shortage of them, quite honestly, Madam Speaker.

I think that the work before us and the challenge before us is to ensure that we get this economy back on track. For us, it is one of the major priorities. We see the economy very differently than this government, who do like to choose winners and losers, which does have a negative impact on how we attract businesses to the province of Ontario. It's just the reality that it is.

We see infrastructure investment as a key component of building the economy. We see transit as having a major impact. For the life of me, I can't understand why this government has not got Metrolinx's budget around their commercials, around their advertising, telling us—the people who are paying for those commercials—what a great job they're doing. It adds insult to injury.

So we see infrastructure, we see transit—we see prevention in the health care file as a key component. That's why our member from Nickel Belt so strongly advocated on banning tanning beds, especially for youth. We forced you—it will not be our legacy. Our legacy will be that we—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Only 1% of the health care budget is spent on prevention—1%. How is that a strategy? How is that an idea that even works? Somebody over there must recognize that 1% of \$52 billion on prevention is not the best strategy. If someone just raised their little hand in the Liberal caucus meeting and said, "Listen, why don't we spend 2%?" Just push the envelope a little bit. Let's try to be better together.

We see the economic file as: infrastructure, transit, prevention and health care. We see some significant changes that can happen in the education file, for instance, in post-secondary and training.

Certainly, on the energy file you could take another hour and just brush the surface of the energy revisions that need to happen. Serious reform needs to happen on the energy file. You see CEOs getting millions and millions of dollars in salaries, and you see the taxpayers, the consumers, the citizens of this province paying the ultimate price for that incompetence. People are getting frustrated, and they're getting frustrated with really good reason, I think.

The social infrastructure of this province has been a huge draw for businesses. I just want to make that point on the economy, because we are incredibly focused on jobs on this side, in the NDP. The social infrastructure draws companies, draws investment into the province of Ontario, so we need to make sure that health care is working. When there's scandal after scandal after scandal in health care, that compromises and undermines confidence in our economy. When you see the energy file, when you see the hydro bills of companies, manufacturing and businesses continue to rise, despite these so-called smart meters, there's a level of frustration which is very real.

So when we came forward with our ideas—we really had hoped that the Liberals would listen to our job creator tax credit because that idea came from the people whom we serve in the province of Ontario, those businesses that say, "We're willing to invest. We're willing to train. We're willing to be innovative and rise up to the new economy, but we want to see that the government wants to partner in that." The job creator tax credit, the tax credits for capital, the tax credits for retraining and training—they like those ideas. It's very clear to them. They see where the role of government is in the economy of the province of Ontario. We like that, too, because it's a level of transparency and a level of accountability with public tax dollars, and the public recognizes that small and medium-sized businesses create the majority of new jobs in the province of Ontario.

There's no better example of that than Kitchener-Waterloo, with the start-ups and Communitech and the

Accelerator Centre, and these youthful entrepreneurs who have done the research and are willing to commercialize the research and then are willing to create the jobs. They are willing and able and ready to be part of the equation on the economy, and, quite honestly, a lot of them inspire me.

But that has nothing to do with what's before us right now, with Bill 151.

Interjection: That's right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But you call it "strengthening and improving government." When I think of strengthening and improving government, I think of governments that are actually willing to put forward policy and legislation which works for the people. That's what I would think if I was just reading the title—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Who thinks up these names anyway?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't know. A poli-sci 101 student came up with that: Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

This bill consists of five completely unrelated house-keeping changes of the sort that usually appear as minor schedules in a budget bill—usually. Maybe you could have thrown this into the budget: minor schedules in a budget bill. Instead, on April 29, we are talking about housekeeping instead of the real priorities of the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time to share some of our thoughts on a piece of legislation which doesn't serve the people of this province. Just to confirm, we can be stronger, we can be better, and the people of this province need us to be that way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments? The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I listened to the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, and for the most part I was scratching my head, because she was talking about things that, in my view, are not related to the bill in front of us. So in my little time, I do want to talk about the bill, and I want to take great exception to what she said about there being nothing real here, "nothing for the people," she said.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: She didn't talk about the bill.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: She didn't talk about the bill; that's right.

I'll give you a real example of how this is relevant to the people of Ontario, and there are many examples in here.

The changes to the Pension Benefits Act to clarify spousal entitlement: That's a real issue. Strengthening partnerships with the OMA: That's a real issue. Better informing decision-making in post-secondary education—these are our future business leaders and maybe politicians of the future: That's important.

But the one that's really real for me, and I think for other people, is the one under the Highway Traffic Act, and I've spoken about this before. It's to improve the safety and reliability of non-ambulance transportation in Ontario. Now, these vehicles, which are former ambu-

lances, are used more and more for real people in Ontario for medical transport between hospitals, long-term-care homes and back. They are being used for my husband on a monthly basis, from my home to specialist medical appointments.

These vehicles need licensing and regulation. They provide a great service, and the staff who transport my husband are fantastic. However, there's a lot of confusion about these vehicles, about who pays for what and what the qualifications are, and the Ombudsman spoke to this. This is a real issue. This is something that seniors and sick people need to have addressed now, and even more in the future.

So to say that this bill does not address real issues is completely, completely wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened—I interrupted my listening from time to time and went for a coffee. An hour is a long time. Congratulations for lasting, but you didn't use all the time. You had six minutes left, and you could have really gotten down to some serious investigation on Bill 151.

Now, I am saying that I am looking forward to our speaker that's coming up very shortly. The member from Dufferin—Caledon will be leading off for us, and I look forward to that.

The bill has a couple of sections that, as I said—looking at the bill itself, I think there are five sections. Yes, there are five sections to the bill. The one that intrigues me is the one under the Ministry of Finance: the provisions of pension benefits. That's an important aspect, and I expect maybe in the government we'll hear something about the new pension plan for Ontario. I don't know how it's going to be funded. We'll all be waiting for that.

1000

But there's another section here under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, schedule 4. It looks like in this section here they're setting up another discussion panel, but what's really missing is that they don't really have a coherent plan here. There is a lot of tinkering, a lot of minor amendments to a bill—a number of bills, actually. The Courts of Justice Act is amended, dealing with spousal entitlements; there's a section on that. This bill is a lot of administrivia, but there's really no plan, especially under schedule 4, which I mentioned. That's the part where I'm most troubled about young people in post-secondary education and what they're actually going to do after they graduate. There are really very few jobs for young people today after they've finished spending \$10,000 or \$20,000 or \$30,000 or more on their education. They come out and find that there are no real jobs. When you look at it, everyone can't work for the government. We know that. You have to have somebody who is actually adding value to something, whether it's in the resource sector or in—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time is up. The member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to congratulate my friend and colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo for doing a lead that she wasn't assigned to do. Imagine, at the very last moment she does a lead of almost one whole hour—that impressed me to no end.

She spoke well about the title, which is something the Liberals have borrowed from the Conservative Party over the years. “Strengthening and improving government”—please, a little more frankness about what you do. Those kinds of titles are very deceptive in terms of what you do with these things. They are housekeeping measures, and some of them are useful. The Pension Benefits Act is required because of court decisions. Some of these things are useful, although the member from Kitchener–Waterloo makes an incredibly good point about things that are so important to so many people out there. While these are housekeeping matters that are useful, they're not the most critical ones we should be dealing with, especially in the dying days of a Liberal government, I say to you.

I've got to tell you, the Council of Ontario Universities makes a number of suggestions. They declare that they have amendments about the disclosure of students' personal information. They have four amendments, one which includes a provision that a specific Ontario education number will be used in research and analysis as the identifier of an individual, anonymized record. They also say that collection of personal information concerning aboriginal status should not be permitted. There are a number of these amendments that I think are useful to look at, especially as we send this to committee, including the collection of personal information on the use of student services—for example, disability and accessibility services, health services and counselling services—should not be permitted. These are useful suggestions that we should be including in this debate as we send it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciated the clarification from the honourable member there that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo was filling in. I'm relieved to hear that, because it does help me understand why she drifted entirely off the legislation. One of my favourite books is Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, and I think the member from Kitchener–Waterloo could well write the sequel because I think she probably broke both her arms patting herself on the back in her designated pre-campaign rant, which is just something I note in passing.

We have a lot of things in this bill. The member from Durham, my good colleague opposite, has mentioned some of the more useful things. The bill itself is in response to a number of requests from people in the sectors that the bill speaks to to clean up some of the ongoing problems that are there. I have no dispute that it's a housekeeping bill, and if everybody agrees it is, let's just pass the darn thing and get on with some of the things that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and many others in this House would like to address. I'd be quite keen to do that.

The one thing I did find interesting about the member opposite—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, we're working really hard on the developmental services sector. It will be interesting to see, when we vote on the budget, whether you stand in your place and actually vote to invest the kinds of resources that folk in the developmental services sector need, because you were investing zip when you were in government.

All that aside, Madam Speaker, she did mention worker safety. Worker safety is front and centre in this bill, albeit a housekeeping bill, and we should get on with it as quickly as we can.

Other than that, God bless her.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his comments and, of course, the member from Trinity–Spadina for his comments.

I take great exception: The Minister of Consumer Services mentioned that this ambulance part is important—of course. Under this subsection, ambulances “must contain prescribed equipment and meet prescribed inspection and maintenance standards.” Why isn't it already happening right now? Why isn't it already happening?

When you designed the air ambulances, why didn't the government make sure that people can do CPR in those air ambulances? What about that?

So there are good reasons to actually question the competency of this government. And I do find that, over the last few months, there have been more personal comments made, more and more and more.

When the Minister of Community and Social Services announced the \$800 million in Kitchener–Waterloo last week, the parents came back to me because they don't have any confidence in this government to do the right thing. They said, “You know what? We had some questions.” They wouldn't take their questions. There is a huge lack of trust. The government was promising that they are going to end the wait-lists. You know how they're going to end the wait-lists? They're going to kick kids out of service. That's what I heard from those parents.

That is shameful, to come out before a budget and make a huge announcement that you should have been doing already. You should have been doing it already.

So here we are today talking about housekeeping issues. Individually, they are important, but these are not the priorities of the province of Ontario. Making sure that people actually have the resources in health care and education, making sure that we have a jobs strategy and making sure that businesses know what the rules of engagement are for this government, those are the real priorities. We have to make sure that the people in this province can get back to work. Yet you bring Bill 151 before us, and you say that these are your priorities. Get your act together.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1007 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to welcome a very good friend of mine, Michael Patrick, who is the new PC candidate for the riding of Durham. He's here to observe question period. Welcome, Michael.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole:—from a few other introductions, if I could. I'd like to introduce a group of members of Advocis, who are with us here at Queen's Park today. From Whitby, there's Jack Snedden, Louisa Majoros, Wayne Daley, Ron Fennell; from Oshawa, Mike Capesky; from Bowmanville, John Willoughby; and from Pickering, Don Turnbull. Welcome to Queen's Park. We look forward to meeting with you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

It looks like we have quite a few introductions, so I'm going to ask everyone for their indulgence, to make your introductions as quickly as possible, and I'll try to accommodate everyone.

Introductions?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'll just build on the introductions from the MPP from Durham without repeating and add Claude Rochefort. I don't know if he's here today, but he's also from the Durham chapter of Advocis. Welcome to all from the Durham chapter.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome a good friend from Kitchener—Conestoga, Dennis Yanke, who is here with Advocis as well. For those who get a chance to meet with him today, please ask him about his book.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome Chris James, who lives and works in my riding of London West and is here today with Advocis, and who is accompanied by Kusum Sen, who is also with Advocis. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I want to welcome Advocis and their representatives from across Ontario. I want to especially recognize Michael Vagnini and Phil Sawyer, who are from Sudbury—great examples of what financial planning should be all about. Thank you very much for attending today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome Dawn Kennedy from Bruce county today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like the assembly to welcome two guests from the Kingston area who are with the chapter of Advocis in Kingston: Will Britton, the incoming president of the local chapter; and Ed Bettencourt, the past president of the local chapter for Advocis in Kingston.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Jeff Elliott, who is the father of page Ethan Elliott, in the west gallery today.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to introduce William Burch, a constituent who is here in the Legislature with

us somewhere. I haven't seen him yet, but he's here with us somewhere.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On behalf of New Democrats, I just want to welcome Advocis. My nephew John DiNovo is a long-time member. Welcome back again to Queen's Park, all of you.

Mr. Norm Miller: I wanted to introduce Richard Borland, who's down from Muskoka for the Advocis Queen's Park day. I hope he has a great day.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome a few friends from Ottawa who are here: Kris Birchard, who's the chair of advocacy from Advocis; and David McGruer, also from Ottawa. I also want to welcome David Juvet, who is the vice-chair of the board; and Roger McMillan and Linda Gratton, who are the co-chairs of the Ontario provincial advocacy committee for Advocis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to welcome a friend of mine, Andrew Johnson, who is here with the Advocis group. I look forward to meeting him later on.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to introduce a number of financial advisers from Peterborough who are here for the Advocis lobby day at Queen's Park: Linda Gratton, Mimi Rogers, Doug Boden, Crystal Wilkinson, Dave Jolley, Jay McMahon, Alex Fischer and Dwight Hickson.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On behalf of the member from Simcoe North, whose page's mother is here—Mary Lou Doleweerd—as well as the grandfather, Francis Smith.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome three Advocis representatives who are here today from Waterloo region: Darren Sweeney, Alan Anderson and Roger Jankey. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a group of people here this morning to witness our vote on Bill 21. From the Heart and Stroke Foundation: Cristin Napier, Krista Orendorff, Sumi Shan, Mark Earle, Matilda Won Yong Choi, Brian Kellow and Tendai Nzuma; from the Canadian Cancer Society: Florentina Stancu-Soare, Joanne Di Nardo and Kelly Gorman; Alzheimer Society: Delia Sinclair Frigault; and Ontario Caregiver Coalition: Lisa Levin.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today I'm delighted to recognize a constituent of mine who is here on behalf of Advocis: Paul Higeli; as well as a very good friend of mine, Nithy Ananth, a good Liberal from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to introduce Linda Gratton from Freedom 55 Financial who is here today at Queen's Park.

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to join with my colleagues in welcoming representatives of Advocis. I'd like to extend a special welcome to someone who I've been supporting with my premiums for the last number of years, Mr. Roger McMillan of McMillan Financial.

Hon. Mario Sergio: We have in our Legislative Assembly today a delegation from sunny Dominican Republic. We have Deputy Rubén Luna, Andres Rodriguez,

Yoneidi Santana, Angela Candelario and Henry Samuel. They are here seeing how we are behaving ourselves today. I hope they will enjoy their stay.

Remarks in Spanish.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome a couple of Advocis members from the Quinte region: Jane Simpson and Shannon Neely, along with the director of government relations, Peter Tzanetakis, who informs me that there are 100 financial advisers here—I think they've all been introduced.

Bill Cook is a retired teacher from Hastings county through Thunder Bay; he's here as well, and I'd like to welcome him to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to introduce a good friend of mine today on behalf of Advocis: my friend Eric Barton from Sault Ste. Marie.

JONATHAN JENKINS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence in this House to mark the passing of Jonathan Jenkins who was an exceptional journalist, a press gallery member, and I'm sure we all know that his wife Nancy and his children Dexter and Maizey are going to be suffering today and for many, many weeks to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is requesting unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members of the House and those in the galleries to please rise for a moment of silence in respect.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

IMMIGRATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you'll find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. It reads thus:

This House condemns the distribution by the group called Immigration Watch Canada of hateful material toward the Sikh community in Brampton; and reaffirms the positive values of tolerance and inclusion that are the hallmarks of modern Ontario society; and that the question and the motion be immediately put without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We first need the unanimous consent, so I would ask: Do we agree with the motion to be put forward without notice? Do we agree? Agreed.

The Premier believes that this House condemns the distribution by the group called Immigration Watch Canada of hateful material toward the Sikh community in Brampton; and reaffirms the positive values of tolerance

and inclusion that are the hallmarks of modern Ontario society; and that the question and the motion be immediately put without further debate or amendment.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1040

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time, I would like our pages to assemble to be introduced to the House.

Ashley Bowes, Oshawa; Caitlin Boyle, Brampton West; Thomas Brassard, Thunder Bay—Atikokan; Gabriel Chemla, Etobicoke—Lakeshore; Kaitlyn Doleweerd, Simcoe North; Kaia Douglas, Peterborough; Ethan Elliott, Perth—Wellington; Meaghan Frank, Essex; Lavanya Guntherathas, Scarborough Centre; Emmanuelle Hébert, Mississauga South; Frank Hong, Willowdale; Daniel Hoogsteen, Burlington; Émilie Lebel, Timmins—James Bay; Ayesha Mir, Don Valley East; Zahra Mohamed, Markham—Unionville; William Qin, Mississauga—Brampton South; Victoria Recagno from Oakville; Brendan Sheppard from Barrie; Ethan Walker, Wellington—Halton Hills; and David Zhou, Scarborough—Agincourt. Our new pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Reassemble, please.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I just want to add that I appreciate the moment of silence from the leader of the NDP. Our thoughts and hearts are with Jonathan Jenkins's wife, Nancy. I say to his kids—hopefully they'll see the Hansard someday—I think the highest praise we can give to a journalist is that he was tough, but fair. Every time I talked to Jonathan, there was nothing that dominated his heart more than his pride in his son and daughter. He's watching over them. He's damn proud.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I just want to say it's great to have my deputy leader back in the House today—

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm going to ask one of the pages to bring over a document to the Premier entitled Transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. There's a briefing that the Premier received.

Premier, I don't know if you'll have time, but I'm going to refer you to page 26 of the document that you were briefed on. The finance ministry officials say that the greatest negative impact on job creation—in fact, it will cost jobs—are payroll tax increases. Again, that's page 26. I've highlighted it to call attention to that particular bullet; geing a son of two teachers, it just happens.

On page 26, it indicates that payroll taxes will cost us jobs. Do you agree with finance officials that an increase in payroll taxes will cost us even more jobs in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to add my personal condolences to the family, friends and gallery colleagues of Jonathan Jenkins and wish them all well. It's a very hard and sad time.

And I want to welcome Christine Elliott back and just say that your strength is remarkable. It's wonderful to have you back.

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To my friend opposite, if what he is asking is whether I believe that bringing in a plan that will allow people to save for their retirement and have retirement security when they are ready to leave the work world, I would suggest that that is absolutely necessary.

We have been very, very clear that an enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan would be our first choice, but we believe that it is our obligation to make sure that the people of Ontario have the ability to have a dignified retirement.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, I believe our first obligation is to make sure people have a chance at a well-paying job in our province. I think that's what our number one job should be.

I'll tell you a quick story. I was in Brantford recently, and I met with Scott, who is a construction employer. He had—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —nine people on his payroll. That was in 2003, when the McGuinty-Wynne government began. I asked him how many employees he has now, and he said none—nobody on the payroll except himself. I said, "Why?" He said, "Just more red tape. The energy bills have tripled in this province, and payroll taxes mean I can't hire."

The Ministry of Finance officials indicate that for every \$2 billion in increases on a payroll tax, that will cost us 18,000 jobs.

If you do bring in an Ontario registered pension plan, or an ORPP, that is going to be a tax increase that will cost us 150,000 jobs. Premier, do you agree with the finance officials' predictions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a very interesting question coming from the Leader of the Opposition, because we just lowered payroll taxes: the employee health tax. We reduced that tax to small businesses. It was a tortured process to get the Leader of the Opposition and his party to acknowledge that that was a good thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

I know what he is talking about. He's talking about retirement security. He's talking about our belief and our proposal that we need to bring forward a plan to make sure that people in this province have the opportunity to retire in security.

We would love to have had the support of the Conservatives at the federal level. We would have loved to have had the support of Stephen Harper, which was called for by governments—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Northumberland–Quinte West, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —across the country. We haven't got that, Mr. Speaker, so we are going to move forward. We will be bringing forward a plan in the budget on Thursday to make sure that people have retirement security in this province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order, second time.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, here's the difference between you and me: I want Scott to have the confidence to hire again. I want to see him hire back those nine employees and then more. I want to see that across the province. That's why we stand solidly behind my million jobs plan to create a million well-paying jobs in our province, to get people back to work.

So let me see if I understand this, Premier. You said that you need to lower payroll taxes to create jobs. That's the bill you brought forward that we supported. But now you're saying you're going to increase payroll taxes by \$2,500 a person. That means that if Scott wants to hire somebody, he has to pay wages plus \$2,500, and somebody on the payroll will have \$2,500 less in their pockets. It's pretty hard to make ends meet today when you can't pay your hydro bill. Imagine a \$2,500 reduction in your paycheck.

So which is it, Premier? Do you believe that lowering payroll taxes creates jobs, or do you believe increasing payroll taxes creates jobs? Honest to goodness, you look like Dalton McGuinty. You don't want to have it both ways, do you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the document that he passed across the floor has nothing to do with retirement security. It was a discussion on a totally different subject. What we have said is that we believe there is not enough saving. We know there is not enough saving that people are capable of; that people are at risk of struggling in their retirement. So we are going to bring forward a plan that will allow people to have that retirement security.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about creating jobs, but everything he has brought forward would cut jobs: education jobs, health care jobs. He does not want

to partner with business in this province. He is against partnering with OpenText. He is against partnering with Cisco. He is against partnering with food processors. He is against partnering with the auto industry. That opposition would reduce jobs.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Look, I know you gave \$120 million to OpenText, one of the wealthiest corporations in Ontario. They just gave a big increase to their shareholders. Honest to goodness, that's like giving out food vouchers in Rosedale: It doesn't make economic sense.

1050

Interjection: Been there, done that.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Oh, that's right. You already did that after Christmas. I guess in that you're consistent.

But, Premier, back to the topic. These are your own finance official's documents. You will recall the briefing, I'm sure. Page 15, interestingly, points out that the worst tax increase to slow down the economy is a business tax increase, which is the hallmark policy of the third party. Your hallmark policy seems to be increasing payroll taxes.

Again, on page 26, your own bureaucrats said that a payroll tax increase will lower business investment, will relocate businesses to other jurisdictions, will reduce work effort and will cause an out-migration of people from our province.

So what is it exactly that you like so much about tax increases when your bureaucrats say it will cost us 150,000 more jobs in our province? I want to see more jobs, not fewer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding of a tax is that it would be money that would go into the provincial treasury.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West: second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that that is not what we're talking about. What we're talking about is putting in place the capacity for people to save for their retirement.

People who are 20 and 30 and 40 right now are not able to save enough for their future. That's the reality, so we believe, as do many leaders across the country, that having an enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan would be a very good thing.

Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister, is not interested in doing that, so it is our obligation to make sure that the people of Ontario have the capacity to save for their future and have a secure retirement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There's a basic fundamental of economics that the Liberal Party seems to be ignoring: It's

not where the tax goes to; it's where it comes from. If you put a tax on payroll, that means it costs more to hire somebody. As your finance officials point out, that will mean 150,000 fewer people working in our province. It also means that money comes out of your paycheque. That means that families will have an average \$2,500 less at the end of the year. That's a tax increase that your own officials say will cost us 150,000 jobs.

I want to ask you this, Premier: If your plan is putting 150,000 people out of work, if they have no paycheque, how the heck are they going to save for a pension when their income is zero?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not getting things quiet for someone to heckle.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just have to say that the Leader of the Opposition is simply on the wrong side of this issue. He listens to people who have worked in the financial—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you're testing my resolve, it's working. The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, Mr. Speaker, we looked to the federal government to enhance the Canada Pension Plan. In fact, we know that documents from the federal Department of Finance demonstrated that an expansion to the Canada Pension Plan would represent meaningful long-term economic benefits to the country.

The advice at the federal level and across the country is that there needs to be more capacity for saving in this country. That's the reality. That's what we're dealing with. David Dodge agrees with that, leaders across the country agree with that, and federal finance officials agree with that, but the federal government does not want to act. We are taking that responsibility seriously, and we will bring our proposal forward on Thursday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, we know what this is about. When you started out, you were going to be the social justice Premier. That sort of disappeared. Then you were going to be the jobs Premier, and Lord knows that's out the window with this latest tax grab. You were going to be the transit Premier and increase taxes no matter what, and then you backed away from that. So you're looking for something to put in the window.

I understand that politicians get that way, but I'm concerned that you are putting your own interests ahead of the interests of taxpayers. I was talking to a senior citizen in my office the other day who can barely pay her hydro bill—a widow. She has paid off the mortgage, but she can't pay the hydro bill. Workers are facing the same thing. If you're working at a part-time job, if you can't pay the hydro bill, you can't set money aside for retirement.

I've got a very different plan. I want to see the middle class create more wealth. I want to see more jobs in our province—that's what I want to see—with more take-home pay; you want to subtract from it.

I've just got to ask you: Why in the world would you make a significant \$2,500-per-person middle-class tax hike? Isn't that going to cost us jobs, not create them?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for making my case, because the reality is that that woman who was in his office—he's right. There needs to be relief, and the Minister of Energy has brought in programs to help that woman so that she can get some relief on her energy bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, what we know is that if we don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to tolerate people shouting people down.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We need relief from you, Kathleen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay will come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. No more.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If we don't take action, people who are in their thirties and forties now will be in that position because they will not have a decent pension; they will not be able to retire with any kind of security. So what we're doing is we are looking down the road, understanding that people are not able to save enough now, and putting in place a support for them so that they will have a decent retirement. That's the long view we're taking.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order.

New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When the Premier was in Windsor last July, she told reporters she had just found out that girders installed on what she termed the largest infrastructure project in Ontario did not meet Ontario's safety standards. Does the Premier stand by that statement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will reinforce what I have said repeatedly in this House and what the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has said. As soon as we knew that there was a problem with the girders in Windsor, we stopped the building. We did a review. Those girders are being taken out—they have been taken out. We made sure that the safety standards were in place. We took action, and that is exactly what we will do

any time there is a safety concern with construction in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, according to documents released through FOI, both the offices of the Premier and the minister knew that these girders did not meet safety standards before they were installed. The minister's office learned about the substandard girders in December 2012, after which high-level biweekly meetings were held to discuss them. These meetings included senior staff within the minister's office, and in April of last year the executive director of policy in the Premier's office—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Infrastructure, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —was informed of the problem.

Now, is the Premier saying that senior staff in her own office did not tell her about the—

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I want to do a fact-check on this question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sudbury, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —public safety concerns on what she calls the largest infrastructure project in Ontario's history?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is that the minister's office staff were first briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013, and the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013, and we took action because of our concerns. That's what I'm saying.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: During the Liberal leadership campaign, the Premier boasted that she oversaw the negotiations and the construction of the Windsor-Essex parkway while she served as Minister of Transportation. We know that the Premier's director of policy was being sent minutes—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —of the biweekly girder meetings as early as April and probably even earlier.

Does the Premier expect that the people of this province believe that her senior advisers didn't alert her to a potential scandal surrounding faulty girders being installed on a project that she authorized?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I can say to the leader of the third party is that we took action, and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and I were very clear that as soon as we knew that there was a problem, as soon as we knew that action needed to be taken, we took action.

I don't know if the leader of the third party is making a broader statement that she doesn't support the building

of large infrastructure projects. I don't know if the leader of the third party doesn't believe that it's important for us to invest in infrastructure in this province, but we believe it is. We believe it's important, and we believe that when there is a problem, you take action, and that's what we did.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

1100

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. A July 21, 2013, confidential memo to the Premier on the girder issue states: "There has been some chatter about this situation in Windsor construction circles and we understand that the Windsor Star may be coming out with a story on this matter this week. It may break during the Premier's visit to Windsor on July 22."

Can the Premier tell us why safety issues were ignored until they threatened to disrupt the Premier's campaign to hold a seat in a by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is really hard to characterize that question as anything but offensive.

Mr. Speaker, the safety of the people of this province is our number one concern. Yes, we believe that investing in infrastructure projects is very important, but we also believe that when we hear that there is a concern, when there is a problem, as soon as there is a problem, it is our responsibility to make a decision and take action. That is what we did.

On top of that, we brought the MPP from Windsor-Tecumseh into the process. We briefed him. We kept his party and her party informed. She knows that, Mr. Speaker. She knows he was part of the process and she knows we took action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what is offensive is the Liberals putting their own political well-being ahead of the public safety of the people of Ontario. That's what's offensive.

We know from internal correspondence that this government knew that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Wrap up, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We know from internal correspondence, Speaker, that this government knew the girders on the parkway were faulty and didn't act on these public safety concerns for seven months. Had the Windsor Star not been investigating these girders, would these unsafe girders continue to quietly be installed on the parkway to this very day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear about this, as I was yesterday. I am deeply offended by the leader of the third party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is not helpful in the conversation.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nor is the member from Lanark.

And when I sit down, if somebody else starts up, I'll nail you.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I hope the leader of the third party will take the time to correct her own record.

I'm going to read into the record very carefully and very slowly the report of both ministries, Infrastructure Ontario: "Minister's office ... staff were first briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013, and the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013."

Mr. Speaker, the reason I was briefed is because in May, when I was asked, under instructions from the Premier, to thoroughly review each infrastructure project, I was advised that there were concerns. The first week of June, I went to both deputy ministers. Both deputy ministers said they were not aware of any safety concerns, and they undertook a review right away.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When she was the Minister of Transportation, the Premier awarded the project agreement for the Windsor-Essex parkway. She bragged about it during the Liberal leadership race. But documents that we have obtained show that engineers at the Ministry of Transportation were raising concerns about the poor quality of construction and serious deficiencies of this project.

Now, what does the Premier have to say to the people of Windsor, and the people of Ontario, frankly, when they see that she was prepared to put political expediency ahead of public safety?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When the Premier was the Minister of Transportation, no one in senior management—nor was there any information or knowledge there was a problem.

When I became minister, I heard concerns and rumours. Every minister hears rumours and concerns. I validated those. It was not until this government ordered full destructive testing and two sets of tests that we discovered in late August that there was a safety issue, as a result.

My question is, where was the opposition? The member for Windsor West raised this issue. All your Windsor members were silent. I hope the leader of the third party will rise and apologize for the inaccurate information she is putting on the record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I want to begin by complimenting you on your dedication to fitness. A few months ago, you ran television ads telling Ontarians how much you love to run. It's obviously an important part of your life.

Now try to imagine: What if you couldn't run? What if you couldn't breathe? What if your lungs were constantly filled with mucus? What if you could never run again? How would that make you feel?

Madi Vanstone, a 12-year-old girl with cystic fibrosis, started out not being able to run and barely being able to walk. Now, thanks to the new drug, she can run. She can run like you, and she loves it. She loves being able to do something as simple as being able to run.

But how much longer will she be able to run? The money Madi's family and friends have fundraised is quickly depleting. In fact, right now, her dad's insurance company, that covers half the cost of the drug, is re-assessing his claim.

Premier, help Madi run, or better yet, run with Madi. When will you fund the drug Kalydeco?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to give an update on the situation.

I know that the member opposite knows that I met with Madi and her mom. I don't know if they're in the House, but—there they are. I know that the member opposite also knows that there is a national process that we are pushing very hard. When I met with my colleagues from across the country a few weeks ago, we made it clear that this is not an issue just for Madi, that there are other children and other people in other parts of the country who need this drug to be covered. We need that deal, and we are pushing very hard.

I will ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, you and your health minister continue to tell us that you have to be cognizant of all taxpayers, that you are waiting to get the best value for the drug Kalydeco. That's your excuse.

But when it came to the gas plant scandal, instead of waiting for the best deal, by cancelling the Oakville plant after the election, you spent \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' money to save a couple of your colleagues' seats. The sky is the limit to save your own political skins, but \$300,000 for a life-saving medication for a young girl has to go through years of negotiations. It's wrong.

And now, ahead of a possible spring election, we see in leaked budget documents that you're set to spend another \$6 billion on various new spending projects while children like Madi suffer. It's absolute nonsense.

It has been 15 months. Madi and her mom are here today. This is a child, a human life. People are dying, waiting for orphan drugs to be approved by your government. When will you do the right thing and fund this medication?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, welcome Madi and her mom to the Legislature today. As you know, Speaker, we have committed to keeping the family informed of the negotiations. This was an issue that came up when health ministers from across the country gathered. In fact, we collectively agreed to do something we have never done before, and that is that we have asked to sit down with the manufacturer to find a resolution to this issue. Children like Madi do need access to the drug. We want this drug to be listed, but we need to insist that the pan-Canadian process works.

1110

We have successfully negotiated over 30 listings, saving us over \$50 million. We must continue to work with the manufacturer, Vertex, a US-based company. They must work with us so that we can fund this drug for people like Madi.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Speaker, senior ministry engineers are concerned that because of the design build model on the Herb Gray Parkway, structures won't last even half the lifespan outlined in the project agreement. Senior MTO engineer Joey Chirico says that under the AFP model authorized by Premier Wynne, MTO has little to no oversight and that he is "certain nothing will be done by the construction companies to fix the deficiencies identified by the MTO."

Speaker, why did the Premier authorize a contract that cut the lifespan of the project, compromised public safety and put the public on the hook for costs associated with the delays?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I just will be very clear. Everything that was just said is in fact not accurate, to say the least. The project is up to the highest safety standards in Ontario, which has the highest roads and bridge standards in North America, the highest safety levers.

The members opposite are not literate about the basics of this. They do not understand the difference between a discussion about compliance—and compliance means everything from grass seed to the colour of a post, so when you see discussions about compliance, they are usually minor issues.

The safety standards by the chief engineer and the deputy minister and independent experts, now three engineering companies—this is the highest standard of safety. Any faulty girder has been removed, and because of the AFP process, the company—not the taxpayers—is paying for it. And you're opposed to that because you would rather have the taxpayers pay for it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, it's not all about the girders. There's a lot of other stuff going on there. Senior ministry engineers are saying that the Herb Gray Parkway may not even last half of the lifespan outlined in the project agreement that Premier Wynne authorized. We may have already lost more than half the value of the \$1.4-billion project, and it hasn't been completed.

The Premier authorized the project agreement that stripped away the government's ability to deal immediately with ongoing structural deficiencies. Will the Premier take responsibility for the Herb Gray Parkway project and come clean with the full liability to Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member for Windsor West has already been there and done that a year ago. She raised this issue, and we acted. The NDP has more members now in that area than we do, and if they had one more, this would have been a problem, because it was only the member for Windsor West—you guys were on the bench asleep.

Let me just read into the record the member from Windsor—Tecumseh's letter: "Taxpayers" will "be on the hook for those eight months of construction" costs. That is not true. Taxpayers are not on the hook for anything. So here the member is sending out communications that I believe he knows are different than what the facts are.

So I would again—because I thought I had with Mr. Good Morning a collegial relationship, but it appears that he's very prepared to say one thing in this House and another thing out there, and there's a distraction here, because what you are saying out there bears no relationship to the facts, my friend.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. I am incredibly proud that our government has demonstrated our commitment to helping young people find meaningful employment through our youth jobs strategy. I know this strategy was developed after a series of consultations which brought together business leaders, employers, not-for-profits, educators, labour and, of course, the young people themselves. This local perspective directly influenced how our government designed our larger strategy.

I know we've had recent announcements on the success of these programs, especially in my riding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. We could all use a little bit of respect around here.

Please finish your question.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I know we've had recent announcements on the success of these programs, especially in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, which has a significant young population in communities like West Hill, Kingston Galloway/Orton Park, and Mornelle Court.

Through you, Speaker, would the minister please update this House on recent developments of our youth employment strategy?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: You got it—Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Mr. Speaker, this \$295-million investment that was announced in last year's budget is paying real dividends for youth right across this province. We are very proud of the success that we've seen so far, and I'm going to give a couple of examples of just how we're making a difference in helping young people get employment in Ontario.

At George Brown College here in Toronto they are working at providing skills training in commercial baking, as well as sheet metal construction, for youth here in the GTA who are facing multiple barriers to employment.

I was recently in Windsor as well, making an announcement at the Downtown Windsor Business Accelerator, where that organization—a great initiative in downtown Windsor—is mentoring and supporting young entrepreneurs from the Windsor-Essex region of the province.

Lastly, Operation Come Home: I had the honour, together with the member from Ottawa Centre, just a couple of weeks ago, to visit that facility right in downtown Ottawa, which is doing amazing work with formerly homeless young persons, quite frankly, helping them start highly successful businesses, changing their lives around for their betterment and for the betterment of their colleagues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. My constituents will be happy to hear that the youth jobs strategy is being fully implemented.

As a member from Scarborough, I know our sizable youth population appreciates the opportunities that we've created to help them get a good start. So many organizations like IMPACT 'n Communities and the East Scarborough Storefront are working tirelessly on this issue. I understand the importance of partnering with industry to ensure that we train and provide opportunities for youth, not only for the jobs of today but to help them with their future careers. I know this specifically, having held a youth jobs strategy forum as well as a business breakfast to engage local employers.

Our youth employment fund is a key part of these initiatives. Can the minister give us an update on what the youth employment fund is doing to move towards our government's goal of creating good jobs for young people and growing our economy?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Building a strong economy and creating job opportunities for youth is a priority for our Premier; it's a priority for this government. In fact, it's one of our top priorities.

I'm pleased to be able to say that our youth employment fund has been an extraordinary success. Since its launch in September, this fund has already helped 11,526 young people find job experience right in the workplace.

The fund has also had a particular focus on youth furthest from the labour market and I think that is what makes it such a success. It focuses on aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, rural and northern youth, youth leaving care, as well as youth right across this province.

I'm very proud also to be able to share with members that 84% of young people who have completed their placement through the youth employment fund have landed employment. I don't know if it's going to stay that high as this program continues, but it's off to a fantastic start. We're really proud of it. We're giving young people that opportunity in the workplace that they need to help us build a stronger economy.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. She boasts of her government's openness yet it is her Liberal Party that has been accused by the OPP of destroying documents related to the gas plant scandal, and it is she who is attempting to silence myself and the leader of the official opposition with a lawsuit. And this morning, the Minister of Transportation threatened a lawsuit against the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

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In November 2012, the freedom-of-information request for all gas-plant-related documents in the Premier's office turned up just 100 pages. Then, on the day that she was sworn in as Premier, that FOI was trimmed down to 88 pages. By April 2013, an FOI appeal said it was discovered that emails had been deleted and recovering them would be impossible.

Given that timeline, it's clear that the Premier's commitment to so-called open government was made with the knowledge that several senior Liberals have been deleting emails, because her government would have had to research that and search them. Will she tell us why it took an OPP investigation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe at the moment we have provided 391,707 pages of documents to the committee, including 30,000 from the Premier's office. The Premier herself has appeared in front of com-

mittee, as has the Minister of Energy. I've appeared. The Minister of Transportation has appeared. We've made ourselves available to answer questions that have been put forward by the opposition. I can't say the same thing about opposition candidates. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have co-operated fully with them, and we'll continue to co-operate fully.

The issue of the deletion of documents—the member is well aware—is the subject right now of an OPP investigation, and I think we should allow the OPP to undertake their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier announced that she was going to go through with a project called Open Government. She actually spelled “government” wrong and forgot the N. But I'm going to propose today that we actually change this initiative to “open government” and put a C in there, because this government's record—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not acceptable. The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

Her record on openness is spotty. She told this House the cancelled gas plants only cost \$40 million. When she signed the contract, she would have known the truth.

She held a caucus meeting as Liberal leader and as Premier on January 30, yet she now tries to tell us she wasn't Premier at all. She was Premier while one of her staff had her hard drive wiped by Peter Faist, who, by the way, was still a member of her staff until a month ago.

Surely, the Premier knows that hiding things from the public is going to go badly wrong for her, because we will uncover the truth. Will she be open and honest today with this caucus—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister without portfolio, come to order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member has some gall to talk about truth and facts. Let's get the facts on the record, if I can—

Interjection.

Hon. John Milloy: Not my finest moment, Mr. Speaker.

Let's get the facts to the member. On May 7 last year, the justice committee asked for all gas plant documents in the Premier's office. On May 21, the Premier's office delivered 30,000 documents. Here is what the letter from the chief of staff said: “I am writing on behalf of the Office of the Premier in response to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on May 7 ... on May 9, we were advised by Cabinet Office IT that the email accounts of 52 individuals formerly employed in the Premier's office could be accessed. A search of those accounts was conducted by my office, and any available records applicable to the committee's motion have been

included. I have enclosed with this letter a list of the 52 individuals.”

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the committee, she would have received that letter. What she is doing today is beneath her in standing up and spreading this mischievous—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE INFRASTRUCTURE DE TRANSPORT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Again, to the Premier: Good morning, Premier. I hope you're having a good morning today.

Premier, yesterday, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure claimed repeatedly that the safety of the girders was never discussed with the minister's office before he raised the issue in June. However, I'm holding the agendas of 12 weekly and biweekly update meetings for the minister's office on the Herb Gray Parkway. Each of the meetings, from December 14 to June 7, took place six months before the minister claimed he knew. Each meeting references girders and their lack of CSA certification, certification meant to protect public safety.

Does the Premier stand by the statement that her minister made yesterday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm going to try dans l'autre langue pour une autre fois. C'est très clair qu'il y a des réunions chaque deux semaines. Le sujet des « girders » de béton est discuté chaque fois, mais ce n'est pas une question de si les girders sont saufs ou non. Ce n'est pas discuté. I'll try again in English. There were many biweekly meetings where girders were discussed. Never was there a discussion of safety.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Now, I am not lying; I am telling you the truth. The chief engineer is not lying. The deputy minister is not lying. The assistant deputy minister is not lying. The front-line safety officers are not lying. The independent engineering firms are not lying. For what the member has said to be true, all of those people would have to be lying, so maybe he's wrong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Read the documents. Yesterday, the minister denied that his deputy ministers knew anything about safety issues on the Herb Gray Parkway. The minister said, “The first week of June, I went to my deputy ministers, both of them, and asked them if they knew anything. They both said clearly that they were not aware of any particular safety concerns.”

According to government documents, the minister's deputy minister was regularly updated on the public safety concerns of the girders in 12 update meetings. We see briefings in their own monthly update meetings on

January 15, the 8th of February, the 8th of March and the 12th of April.

Is the Premier going to stand by while her minister denies what's in front of us in black and white?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will try again. It would scare me if these people were ever near power, because—let me tell you what are some of the compliance issues that are outstanding right now. One of them is the shrubs. We have a whole group working to make sure that we have the right kind of shrubs that won't die in six months. That's a compliance issue. The design of a wall and the shape of the wall is a compliance issue. They are not synonymous with safety issues. There are several projects that could have 100 or 200 compliance issues which a junior member of my staff may be briefed on.

The safety issue, until August—we're going all the way to August. I raised this. It gets dealt with: independent testing, twice. The first round of independent testing done by the project company in late July and early August came back with no safety concerns. I was not satisfied, the Premier was not satisfied, and I ordered a second round of testing. Of six girders, one came out faulty. That—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, energy policy has been a hot topic in Ontario. It's an issue that affects every Ontarian directly. In fact, one of the calls I get from my own constituency in Ottawa-Orléans is about their electricity bills and what they can do to lower them.

We have just experienced one of the coldest winters in almost a century. Conservation is the best way to reduce energy costs. I attended the minister's announcement in Ottawa at the Giant Tiger last Friday, where the success of conservation was highlighted.

Residents know that the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which the opposition voted against, is set to expire at the end of 2015. I know my constituents are wondering what the government will do to help them with their bills when the benefits wind down.

Minister, can you please tell the House about the details in the announcement you made last week regarding how our government would be helping people with their electricity bills?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for the question. The previous government allowed the old Ontario Hydro to accumulate tens of billions of dollars of debt, forcing them to take drastic action. This included adding the debt retirement charge—the DRC—onto electricity bills.

To help ease pressure on residential rates, our government announced last week that we will remove the DRC two years earlier than originally projected. Eliminating the DRC would save a typical residential electricity ratepayer about \$70 a year. In addition, we also announced

that we will provide a bill reduction for low- and modest-income consumers. Together with the elimination of the DRC, this program will give a benefit of \$250 each year for eligible consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. It is certainly great news for families across Ontario.

I know my office receives a lot of questions about the debt retirement charge. People wonder why that charge is on their bills, who put it there, and, until last week, when it will be coming off. I can understand where they are coming from.

1130

I know the charge was created by the PC government when they were last in power and that ratepayers have been paying it ever since. But given some of the confusion that seems to exist around the portion of consumers' energy bills, I think it would be helpful for the minister to explain to the House the origin of this charge and why we are still paying it.

Can the minister please explain the history of the debt retirement charge and where the money that is collected goes?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The debt retirement charge is a direct result of the mismanagement of the old Ontario Hydro under the Hudak-Harris PC government. Also, when we took over government, we inherited a system that was not clean, not reliable and not affordable, so we invested \$31 billion to repair the damage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess that's not good enough. The member from Prince Edward—Hastings is warned.

The member from Durham, come to order—second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, they don't like to hear the truth.

We invested \$31 billion to repair the damage. We also took the opportunity to eliminate coal-fired generation, which is taking the equivalent of seven million cars off Ontario roads.

In addition to removing the DRC, we previously introduced a 10% discount on bills and implemented a number of tax credits and rate mitigation measures. In contrast to PC bungling, our government has consistently reduced the stranded debt by over \$8 billion since 2004.

Speaker, I urge the opposition to help Ontario ratepayers save money by supporting our budget and finally taking the legacy costs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Premier, why did the government deliberately and heartlessly sacrifice the horse racing industry in favour of

a pie-in-the-sky scheme to build glittering casinos in Toronto, the Premier's backyard?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite is very supportive of a plan for the horse racing industry that would see it be sustainable over time, into the future. That's exactly what we have put in place.

I came into this job. I knew there were concerns with the changes that were being made in the horse racing industry. The former Minister of Agriculture and Food had made it clear that there needed to be changes made, that the removal of the non-transparent and really not accountable Slots at Racetracks Program—it needed to be changed, but there needed to be a sober second thought on what the replacement would be.

That's why the panel was struck. That's why we took their recommendations. That's why there's \$500 million over the next five years in the horse racing industry to make sure that they have a sustainable future.

I'm proud of the work we've done. We're going to make sure that horse racing in Ontario is sustainable and accountable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Unfortunately, her plan is not working.

Those glittering casinos were never even built, and yet the horse racing industry now lies in ruins. The Auditor General's report yesterday confirmed what we have said all along: The Liberal-NDP move to terminate SARP was done with no consultation or consideration of the enormous damage it would do to people in the industry.

The government had the information to know that their decision would mean fewer race dates, less breeding, less employment and fewer economic benefits to the agriculture industry. Because the government ignored that information, we now have racetracks closed, lawsuits against the province and thousands of jobs destroyed.

Does that even bother the Premier? Because that is her record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My government has stabilized the horse racing industry. We put in place a plan that will allow the horse racing industry to move forward.

The Auditor General was not complimentary of the Slots at Racetracks Program. What she said was, "[O]wners grew reliant on their growing" slots revenue share "just to sustain their horse racing operations. They ... submitted requests to the ORC for fewer ... race days per year." So the SARP program was not working.

I acknowledged during our leadership, though, that the replacement for the SARP program was inadequate. We made the changes when I came into this office, and now there is a path to sustainability. The \$500 million that we are putting in place because of the recommendations of John Snobelen, John Wilkinson and Elmer Buchanan will allow the horse racing industry to be sustainable into the future.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Your minister stated that there will be no additional cost to the government as a result of the girder replacement on the \$1.4-billion Herb Gray Parkway. Your government correspondence says there may, in fact, be substantial costs billed to the government by the project company as a result of the delays in construction.

Can the Premier tell us, how much is your government's failure to act on public safety going to cost Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Transportation will want to speak to the details, but what we need to make clear is that the costs for replacing the girders are being borne by the company. They are not being borne by the taxpayers of Ontario. That is because of the agreement that was in place; that's because of the contract that was in place. I know that the minister will speak to the details.

But I really think it's interesting that the member opposite is not standing in his place and talking about the investment that was announced yesterday in the Ring of Fire for infrastructure in the north. I would have thought that the member from Timmins-James Bay would have thought that that was a very good investment. He's silent on it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The minister claims that there will be no costs to the public associated with the girder replacement, and these construction—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Energy, come to order, please. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Carry on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Premier claims that there will be no costs to the public associated with girder replacement and construction delay.

This reminds me of the gas plant scandals. When news was breaking that the government claimed there were no costs associated with the cancellation, the costs ballooned over \$1 billion.

The Herb Gray Parkway is already costing the public \$1.4 billion. When is the Premier going to tell the people of this province what they will be paying for her failure on the largest infrastructure project in Ontario's history?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The \$1.4 billion is a critical investment in the lives of the people of Windsor. It was an investment that former members Papatello and Duncan and my friend from Windsor West promised, and they delivered—done, done, done. It forced the federal government and the American government to build the

presidential bridge. This will create thousands of jobs and boost the Windsor economy.

Because of your ideological rigidity, you can't support AFP. If this project had been done on the terms of the only way the NDP could do it, that cost would have gone to the taxpayers. It was because of this government's policy and the AFP model that the cost is to the project. The deal is done; the contracts are signed. There is no residual liability.

When will that member and that party stand up for Windsor? When are they going to start demanding that the federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Order. Start the clock. Order. New question.

CANCER PREVENTION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, the Honourable Deb Matthews. For a moment, Speaker, I, too—

Interjections.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Speaker, I can't hear myself—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton-Lawrence will come to order. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, second time. And the minister responsible for seniors is hiding behind his hand again.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry: second time.

Finish, please.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, the Honourable Deb Matthews. For a moment, I too would like to respectfully acknowledge the courage and resilience of the members for Whitby-Oshawa, the former federal and current provincial.

Minister, even way back when in med school, when we were studying into dermatology, we were alerted to skin cancer risks caused by ultraviolet radiation, and knowing these risks of DNA damage, I'm concerned about the use and abuse of tanning beds. As we're approaching the end of the school year, I know that many young people in my own riding of Etobicoke North are thinking about one thing: the end-of-year school prom. That's why many young people feel a pressure to look a certain way. We know, for example, from the World Health Organization that the use of tanning beds under the age of 35 increases skin cancer risk by 75%. What are we doing to protect Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North. As the member has stated, the risk of tanning beds by young people are very clear, yet more and more young Ontarians have been using tanning beds. In fact, we've seen a doubling of the use for grade 11 and

12 students. At the same time, the incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising for young people, and that's why we took action. In October 2013, we passed legislation to prohibit young people from using tanning beds in Ontario. I'm very pleased that that restriction comes into effect tomorrow. Tanning bed operators will need to post signs about this restriction and about the dangers of tanning bed use for everyone. Operators will need to ask for ID from anyone who appears to be under the age of 25 and they'll be banned from marketing their services to youth under 18. This action will save lives, and that's how this year's prom season will be different.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister. I know that many parents in Etobicoke North, of course, and across the province will be pleased with the action that our government is taking to protect young people from cancer. But since cancer, as you'll appreciate, is a multifactorial disease, we know that tanning bed use is only one of the many activities that increase cancer risk. Unfortunately, there are many other forms of cancer, which is, in fact, best thought of as a family of diseases, not a single condition.

As an MD, I know that Ontario's cancer system is top notch and that a person diagnosed with cancer in our province has one of the best chances of survival in the world. But, as always, prevention is better than a cure and there is, of course, more that we should do to stop people from putting themselves in harm's way.

Minister, would you be able to please inform this House what is the government doing in other domains, in other cancer areas, to protect our kids?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I got ahead of myself. The ban comes into effect on Thursday, May 1.

Other things we've done: We've introduced a free vaccine to protect young women against HPV, which is the major cause of cervical cancer. We're working hard to protect our kids from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. We've already banned smoking in enclosed public spaces and motor vehicles when children under 16 are present. Now we're taking the next step with proposed legislation and regulations that would, if passed, increase fines for those who sell tobacco to kids, making them the highest in the country. It would ban flavoured tobacco products, prohibit the sale of tobacco products in schools and child care facilities and prohibit smoking on and around playgrounds, sports fields and restaurant patios. I'm calling on all members of all parties to support this bill. It's what we need to protect our kids from cancer.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture. Last month, Premier, you were missing in action when a century of excellence in agriculture education was put in jeopardy with the Kemptville college closure announcement. Last week, Minister, you were missing in action again. It was

your ministry that committed \$2 million to the University of Guelph to reinstate some skilled trades programs, but failed to do your job in adding those core agriculture courses. The ag community was very clear: any program that didn't include ag was unacceptable. The agriculture community further wants to remind you that the Kemptville college isn't a trade school; it's an agricultural college.

When are you going to stand up as a minister, and stand up for farmers and farm families for agriculture education?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that as soon as we knew of this situation, both with Alfred college and with Kemptville, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, was on the job and was making sure that we found solutions. And we did find solutions, Mr. Speaker. We found solutions with funds attached to those solutions.

So I have been very much engaged in making sure that we work with the University of Guelph, that we work with the colleges, that we work with the community to make sure that a solution was put in place.

If the member opposite is suggesting that I shouldn't have gone and visited the people in the Belleville area, who were struggling with their flooding issues; if the member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's with regret that the member from Prince Edward—Hastings is named.

Mr. Smith was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Order, please.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to say, Mr. Speaker, that it was very important to me that we find a solution on the Kemptville programs. It was also very important to me that I was able to meet with people in the Belleville area as they deal with the effects of the flooding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier. Premier, the farmers and farm families across Ontario know one thing. They know that it's you, Minister, who aren't doing your job on this file.

Minister, let me contrast what a Tim Hudak Ontario PC government would do for Ontario. We'd make private sector job creation a priority and grow the agri-food and agriculture sectors by supporting the education programs they need to stay competitive.

Under a Tim Hudak government, the University of Guelph would get the same answer they got from previous PC agriculture ministers who wanted to close these campuses. The answer we gave them was no.

On behalf of the students in those ag diploma programs who can't begin their education in Kemptville this

year because you said yes, when are you going to stand up for agriculture education in eastern Ontario? Stand up for those students.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Stand up for agriculture.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand why the member opposite and that party believe that it is in the interests of their party to drive wedges between groups of people in Ontario, to drive wedges between rural Ontario and urban Ontario, to drive wedges between people who work on the farm and people who work in urban centres.

I don't believe that, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe that it's in the best interests of the province's future for those kinds of wedges to be exacerbated. But that is the politics of division that they practise.

We made an announcement last week—actually, it was this week—on food processing. Over 60 food processors, over 60 groups, are getting Local Food funding. That group calls that corporate welfare. They're wrong on that, and they're wrong on the supports for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order, please.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 28, 2014, the member from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, submitted a notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege. The notice alleges that there has been contempt of the Legislature on the basis that various members of the House made deliberately misleading statements on budget-related forecasts.

Having had an opportunity to review various procedural authorities, including previous rulings by Speakers of this House, I am now prepared to rule on the matter without hearing further from the member, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

1150

The notice indicates that the cabinet was informed on February 13, 2013, through a slide deck, that a projected deficit figure for fiscal 2009-10 in a 2009 public government document had been more of a worst-case figure than a realistic figure, and that the subsequent 2013 budget reiterated this figure. The notice makes a second allegation, namely that various cabinet ministers made statements in the House that the government was on track to balance the budget by 2017-18, despite the cabinet being informed on February 13, 2013, through the same slide deck, that no plan was in place to achieve this objective, and that the fiscal outlook beyond fiscal 2013-14 was deteriorating.

I first want to address serious questions as to the timeliness of the member's point of privilege. It has been many weeks, if not months, since the Standing Committee on Estimates received the financial documents that formed the basis of the argument made in the notice. This points to a lack of timeliness in submitting the notice. However, I am reluctant to dismiss the member's point of privilege solely on the basis of timeliness, and therefore will address it as follows.

The notice refers to the so-called "McGee test" for determining whether a statement by a member has deliberately misled the House. Pages 653 and 654 of the third edition of McGee's Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand identifies what needs to be established for the Speaker to find a prima facie case of contempt based on a member deliberately misleading the House, as follows:

"There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House."

As Speaker Carr indicated in a ruling in this House at page 102 of the Journals for June 17, 2002:

"The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature, on the basis of deliberately misleading the House, is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

In the case at hand, I make the following observations about the application of the McGee test and Speaker Carr's ruling:

With respect to the McGee test, the repetition of a worst-case financial figure used in a government document, and the supposed absence of a plan to achieve a fiscal objective, is not evidence of the falsity of the figure or of the objective. Moreover, with respect to the allegation that the government led people to believe that it had a plan to achieve the stated fiscal objective, the quoted statements made by ministers in 2013 refer only to being on track toward the fiscal objective, not to the plan to achieve it. Even if they had, I note that the slide deck itself refers to "the plan to balance" relying on "expenditure restraints" and "revenue raising measures."

The slide deck is far removed from pointing to a member knowingly and intentionally making a misleading statement; it does not amount to, in Speaker Carr's words, "an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved." The commentary in the slide deck

is not in the same ballpark as a member making two completely irreconcilable statements in the House, and then conceding that he or she had done so knowingly and intentionally.

Finally, it is not the role of the Speaker to assess the rationale for the use of a worst-case figure in a financial document, let alone to determine whether the figure amounts to misinformation.

The evidence that the criteria in the McGee test have been satisfied is, at very best, speculative.

For these reasons, I find that a prima facie case of contempt has not been established.

I thank the member from Nipissing for his notice.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1200.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members take their seats, please.

Mr. Naqvi has moved third reading of Bill 21. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack

Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario

Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gates, Wayne
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael

MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm

Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanhof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: This is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, and in Ontario, April is Be a Donor Month. On behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I want to encourage anyone who has not yet registered their consent to be an organ donor to do so.

As I contemplated this statement, I thought there could be no better way to convey the importance of organ donation than to ask someone who has lived through the ordeal of waiting for an organ transplant and has been given the gift of life. And so I share with you the words of my constituent Bruce Cuthbert:

"Organ donation is truly the gift of life. I and others like me are living proof that it works. It has allowed us to enjoy a full, healthy, active life that I am grateful to be able to share with my family, friends and community that would otherwise not be possible.

"Others are not so fortunate. In Ontario, 1,500 people are currently waiting on the list for a transplant. One of them dies every three days, even though one donor can save up to eight lives and enhance 75 others.

"The reality is that the need for organ donation not only affects the person waiting for a transplant but also their families, friends and loved ones, whose lives are disrupted and who share in the anxiety and trauma of hoping for a miracle transplant that may never come, all the while knowing they are helpless to do anything.

"More must be done to facilitate and encourage organ donor consent registration."

I want to thank Bruce for his motivational words, and I encourage anyone who has not yet already done so to go to beadonor.ca and register today.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's my great honour to represent the people of my riding of Davenport and to bring their voices into the Ontario Parliament. Some of the brightest minds in Ontario live right in my community. Every year, I meet with young constituents throughout my riding. I visit classrooms, and we discuss the priorities of students for our neighbourhood and for our province and the ways that they can advocate for the things that matter to them.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to meet with grade 5 students at Dewson Street Junior Public School. Last week, their wonderful teacher, Ms. Laura Segreto, sent me copies of letters that Dewson students sent to the Premier. These letters highlight the need for greater access to healthy food in schools and more robust student nutrition programs for kids across the province.

Grade 5 student Riley said, "Our brains need proper food to develop and excel." But according to her classmate Noah, "Some kids don't get a snack from home."

Student Kaden interviewed schoolmates and found that 91% of grade 5 and 6 students want a snack program. Riley, Noah and Kaden want healthy food in schools for students of all ages.

In her letter, grade 5 teacher Ms. Segreto says, "Only half of the students in our school receive a snack, because the costs are too high." Ms. Segreto "would love to see funding from the provincial government to help our school provide snacks to all the students."

I want to thank the students and teachers at Dewson. I hope the government and Premier will take these students' words to heart and that they will continue to invest in expanding our province's student nutrition programs.

ADVOCIS

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome back the members of Advocis, the Financial Advisers Association of Canada, to the Ontario Legislature for their annual Queen's Park day. Professional financial advisors and planners are critical to the economy, helping consumers make sound financial decisions that ultimately lead to greater financial stability and independence. Advocis is an organization that works with decision-makers and the public, stressing the value of financial advice and striving for an environment in which all Canadians have access to the professional advice they need and can trust.

For more than 100 years, Advocis members have delivered financial security and peace of mind through a platform of highly ethical and professional standards. They are here today to promote those higher professional standards and consumer protection and to support a bill put forward by the member from Sudbury, Bill 157, which would further enhance those protections and standards.

They'll be hosting a reception at the Legislature's dining room this evening, and I hope that all members can attend.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I stand with Armenians across Ontario and Canada who are marking the 99th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. This tragedy began on April 24, 1915, with the arrest and deportation of 250 Armenian intellectuals. From that day forward, an estimated one and a half million Armenian men, women and children lost their lives under the Ottoman Empire.

Unfortunately, at the time, the international community failed to take action to prevent this crime against humanity, and even today, many countries have still not acknowledged what was the first genocide of the 20th century. However, in recent years, many nations have shown leadership by acknowledging this genocide for what it truly was. The Canadian Senate officially recognized the Armenian genocide on June 13, 2002, and the House of Commons followed suit on April 21, 2004, condemning this senseless act as a crime against humanity.

Many survivors of this genocide live in Canada today and play a vital role in our communities like those in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, so I am proud that we have acknowledged and condemned something which so deeply impacted their lives. I applaud the members of the Armenian community, who have shown the importance of remembering the past, no matter how unpleasant, in order to shape a better future.

I invite everyone to remember the Armenian genocide as you work together to prevent terrible tragedies like this from ever happening again. Recognition—then remembrance.

TONI ARIGANELLO

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Before I make a statement, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Toni Ariganello in the Speaker's gallery.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Toni Ariganello, manager of circulation in the legislative library, who's retiring tomorrow after 27 years of exemplary and dedicated service. Toni is truly a delightful individual, and she has always greeted visitors to the legislative library with a warm smile. To me personally, and I'm sure to other members of this House, regardless of political stripe, she has been very helpful.

Toni has been working in the legislative library since 1987. She will be greatly missed by many members of this House, her colleagues and her friends, especially those in the legislative library.

Toni, thank you for your years of dedicated service and warm smile that has greeted me since day one, and many other members of the House and staff over the years. May you have many, many happy, healthy, peaceful years ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There will be one less Montreal Canadiens fan in the place.

KIMM FLETCHER

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is with tremendous sorrow that I stand today with the people of Halton, on behalf of the member for Halton, to inform members of this House that Kimm Fletcher, a 41-year-old Milton mother with brain cancer, passed away peacefully on Sunday.

Members will recall her visit to this House on October 31 of last year to ask the health minister to investigate the coverage of her prescribed drug, Avastin. Kimm received a standing ovation from all members, including the Premier and the Minister of Health, who denied her OHIP coverage, ignoring the compassionate-grounds argument made by my colleague Ted Chudleigh.

Her situation quickly caught the attention of the Ontario public, who responded to her plight with sufficient financial support that allowed Kimm to receive Avastin. The drug did not cure her, but it did improve her quality of life, and it prolonged her life by five months so that Kim could have more quality time with her children: her nine-year-old son, Keidon; and her seven-year-old daughter, Martie; along with her husband, Scott. Kimm knew she didn't have long to live, so she courageously made every moment of these last five months count, especially by celebrating her last Christmas with her family.

Kimm moved beyond her own impending personal tragedy to generously reach out to others in situations similar to her own. She raised money to assist others who could likewise benefit from using prescribed drugs like Avastin—because OHIP doesn't cover them.

1510

A deeply spiritual person, Kimm especially loved Pope John Paul II and confided how she would love to see him in heaven. Her wish appears to have come true when she passed away, surrounded by those she loved and who loved her, on the day when Pope John Paul II was declared a saint.

A generous and courageous woman: We will never forget you, Kimm.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to say a few words today about volunteerism in London. April 6 to April 12 was National Volunteer Week in Canada, and it's great that there is now a particular time of year when we can take some time to thank current volunteers for all the selfless work they do, and to encourage those who may not have volunteered in the past to get more involved in their communities.

Volunteering was certainly a focus this past weekend in London. On Friday night, I had the pleasure of attending and speaking at the Volunteer Service Awards at the Marconi club in my riding of London—Fanshawe. The ceremony acknowledged and celebrated some of our finest and longest-standing volunteers in the city of London.

On the weekend, I spent some time at the London Food Bank, planted a tree with my fellow MPP Peggy

Sattler, and participated in a city-wide community cleanup, along with hundreds of other volunteers and their families, to beautify our city as we head into spring.

I truly believe that volunteers are the lifeblood of a thriving community, and I am proud to say that London has such a great volunteer service community: thousands of people who help out with a wide variety of organizations, non-profits and community groups. These volunteers freely give the gift of their time, energy and skills to help others. They are often the first to show up and the last to leave, and I would like to acknowledge their dedication today.

DONALD WILLARD MOORE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise today to remember Donald Willard Moore, a Canadian hero who worked hard to secure civil rights in Canadian immigration policies.

On April 27, 1954, Donald Moore led the first delegation by train of black people to Ottawa to present a brief which criticized the Canadian government for its harsh immigration regulations as they applied to blacks.

Donald Moore's service and commitment to Canada has earned him a place in our history. His self-sacrificing nature led him to forgo self-preservation and, instead, dedicate his life to securing human and civil rights for all Canadians.

Here in Ontario, our diversity is our strength. People from across the world choose to call Ontario home. But were it not for the trailblazers before us, like Donald Moore, Ontario would not be the vibrant, accepting province it is today.

April 27, 2014, marked 60 years since Donald Moore's historic delegation to Ottawa. Today, his legacy lives on in the rights he fought for and the rights we cherish today as Ontarians and as Canadians.

NORTH BAY BATTALION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Many in the hockey community are still buzzing about the feel-good story of the year. Speaker, I'm talking about the North Bay Battalion.

The Battalion will be in Guelph Thursday night for game 1 of the OHL championship series. None of the experts placed any expectations on this team, but they have risen to the challenge, overcoming a 3-1 deficit in round 1 against Niagara—the member from St. Catharines is still reeling from that—and then knocking off Barrie and sweeping the powerhouse Oshawa to reach the league final.

The team's exploits have not gone unnoticed, garnering national media attention from the likes of North Bay OHL alumnus Nick Kyriakos, now of Rogers Sportsnet, and a column from Damien Cox of the Toronto Star, just to name two.

After a 10-year absence from the OHL, North Bay hockey fans have wholeheartedly embraced the Battalion, and the capacity crowds of more than 4,000 that have packed Memorial Gardens show you why North Bay was named Hockeyville in 2007.

To owner Scott Abbott, president Mike Griffin, coach Stan Butler, all of your staff, the players and all of the support staff, I want to thank you on behalf of hockey fans in Nipissing and elsewhere for giving us such a thrill this spring. We are hoping you have plenty more in store as you push toward a berth in the Memorial Cup.

Go, Troops, go!

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that if they win the championship, you'll do another statement with a jersey on, or something to that effect.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to thank all members for their statements.

LEONARD BRAITHWAITE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to one Mr. Leonard Braithwaite, a former member from Etobicoke who served us so ably in the Ontario Legislature from 1963 to 1975, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is seeking unanimous consent to speak in tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

I will turn to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm honoured today to rise on behalf of the PC caucus and pay tribute to Leonard Braithwaite, who served in this Legislature from 1963 until 1975. A testament to his popularity, Mr. Braithwaite was approached by members of the Ontario PC Party, the NDP and the Liberal Party; any political party would have been lucky to have him.

Ultimately, he ran for the Liberals in Etobicoke. He would go on to serve as the Liberal critic for labour and welfare, but it was in education that Mr. Braithwaite may have had the most significant impact.

While it may come as a shock to current members here today and to those watching at home, in 1964, Ontario still had a few laws—one particular law, rather—on the books that mandated schools segregated by colour. A 114-year-old clause in the Separate Schools Act, which was originally written to separate Protestant and Catholic students, allowed for the existence of “separate schools for coloured people.”

By 1911, most segregated students had been transitioned into the public education system. However, one separate school remained open in the 1960s. That school was SS 11, in what is now the town of Essex.

In his maiden speech on February 4, 1964, Mr. Braithwaite took a moment to remind his fellow legislators, “There has not been a need for such schools since before the beginning of this century.” One month later, education minister Bill Davis—the future Premier—introduced a bill that updated provincial legislation and repealed the outdated clause that allowed the practice of segregation in Ontario.

SS 11 closed the following year. Mr. Braithwaite would later refer to this moment as perhaps his greatest accomplishment.

While Mr. Braithwaite was indeed a champion for black Canadians, he sought to improve the lives of all marginalized Ontarians. For the pages in attendance today, I would like to mention that it was MPP Braithwaite who pushed for the addition of female pages here in Ontario. Up until 1971, only boys could serve as pages here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Braithwaite, there are both male and female pages of all backgrounds here today, doing great work in the Legislature.

Following his departure from Queen's Park in 1975, Mr. Braithwaite returned to municipal politics.

He practised law until his death at the age of 88. In 1999, Mr. Braithwaite became the first black benchler elected to the governing council of the Law Society of Upper Canada. Leonard always kept the door to his law office open to anyone who came in to him for mentorship and advice.

He believed very strongly in giving back to his community and to those who had given so much to him. He sponsored youth teams such as the Braithwaite Legal Eagles, which he supported for 26 years. He was active in many associations, such as becoming a founding member of Etobicoke General Hospital's board of governors and the Black Business and Professional Association.

His years of tireless community service and devotion to public office were honoured with multiple awards, including the Order of Canada, the Order of Ontario and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Award. His son may have summed up his father best when he said, “He did what he had to do.”

Even with two years of service for our nation in the air force at the end of World War II and a stellar academic record, Mr. Braithwaite had trouble finding work. He would not let obstacles slow him down, as he eventually went on to open up his own legal practice and serve in public office, where he would break down barriers for future generations.

1520

On behalf of all Ontarians, I'd like to thank Leonard Braithwaite for making our province a better place to call home. Your service within these walls and beyond them will be forever in our memories.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is my pleasure to rise today and offer tribute to a great parliamentarian, Mr. Leonard Braithwaite. We are joined today by Mr. Braithwaite's son, David. Thank you for coming today.

It is not often that any one of us is presented the opportunity to speak about the life of a true Canadian pioneer. Mr. Braithwaite was this country's first black parliamentarian. He was not a man given to hyperbole and so described his achievements modestly. He was simply beating down the doors. He made a habit of that.

He was born to West Indian immigrant parents in 1923 and grew up in the Kensington Market area of

Toronto, which was at the time home to many new immigrant families. He sought to enlist in the armed forces during World War II, right as he turned 18 in 1941. He was consistently denied by recruiters, not just in Toronto but in Hamilton and Oshawa as well. He travelled there by bus in an attempt to enlist, but he was denied. But he kept beating at the door. He was finally enlisted in 1943 into the Royal Canadian Air Force and served overseas in England and the South Pacific before returning home to Toronto in 1946.

Immediately, he applied to the University of Toronto and sought employment. Despite being discriminated against because of the colour of his skin, Mr. Braithwaite secured a job at Nilson's factory in Toronto, because he was a war veteran. He was the first black employee at that factory. He worked night shifts until he began classes at the University of Toronto.

Even though he graduated with honours and a degree from the commerce and finance program in 1950, Mr. Braithwaite was not able to secure a job, so he applied to Harvard Business School and graduated with an MBA in 1952. Again, finding employment difficult to obtain, Mr. Braithwaite returned to Toronto, enrolled at the Osgoode Hall Law School, graduating as president of the student body in 1958. Leonard was the definition of determination.

He opened a small law practice in Etobicoke before jumping into public life in 1960, winning the election as a school trustee—a great place to start, I think, as a future MPP. He was elected as an alderman two years later. He was a popular local politician and turned down an offer from the Premier at the time, John Robarts, to run for the Conservatives. He also turned down the NDP, before finally running for the Liberals. It was their lucky day. He won the Etobicoke riding by just 443 votes.

Mr. Braithwaite became the Canada's first black parliamentarian the same year that Martin Luther King made his famous speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial: "I have a dream."

He made an impact at Queen's Park immediately, rising on February 4, 1964, for his maiden speech as an MPP. Mr. Braithwaite softly reminded his fellow lawmakers that Ontario still had a law on its books mandating schools segregated by colour. He said, "There has not been a need for such schools since before the beginning of this century." A month later, education minister Bill Davis—the future Premier—introduced a house-cleaning bill that repealed the 114-year-old provision.

Braithwaite also fought for gender equality. In 1966, he stood up in the Ontario Legislature and spoke out for the addition of female pages in the House at Queen's Park. They're here today because of the work of Mr. Braithwaite.

His contributions didn't end there, however, nor did his beating on the doors. Braithwaite was the first black benchner of the governing council of the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1999. For his work, he was appointed a member of the Order of Canada in 1997, and invested into the order on February 4, 1998. He was appointed the Order of Ontario in 2004.

As I prepared for this tribute today, I spent some time looking through stories about Mr. Braithwaite's life from various media, flipping through stories from the 1960s until today. It gave me an opportunity to think about what it means to be an elected representative, to become a politician. It takes strength and the courage of your convictions to decide to run, and it takes a great deal more of both if you're lucky enough to win an election. So often, we lose sight of the person behind the politician. We shouldn't forget that. For all the scrutiny that we receive and all the ink that's spilled about what we say and do, we're all just like anyone else. Each and every one of us who sits in this House and who serves as the voice of thousands of Ontarians from the places we call home—we are all just like anyone else. Some of us understand the importance of this responsibility and the weight of this responsibility.

Leonard Braithwaite was clearly a man of great integrity and dignity. Ontario is a better place because of his advocacy and because of his principles. To his family: We thank you for sharing him with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute? The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A very special thank you to my colleagues for their comments, and a warm welcome to David. I'm delighted you're here joining us today.

It's very difficult to do justice to a person's life in a few minutes, especially someone as esteemed as Leonard Braithwaite. People say he was a good man, and he was a good man. He also was an honourable man, as you've heard others have said in this Legislature. Most importantly, he was a good friend, and a good friend to many. As you heard, he had this wonderful policy: His door was always open and he always had time for some good advice, and some of that I would like to share with you.

You've heard that he was born back in 1923. Life was difficult for that family. There was a time when being a visible minority here in Ontario was not easy. His father was a capable machinist but couldn't get work. In fact, he worked less and less—just the odd job. His mom actually worked as a cleaner in the large homes, probably in Rosedale.

But the one thing his family instilled in him always was love of education and how important it was to study, to work and to get that education. That was certainly something he did well. He studied. He succeeded. He excelled at what he was doing.

I don't know if you know, but by grade 10 he was actually selling newspapers on Spadina. By the time he graduated from Harbord Collegiate, he had successfully established the rights to sell papers on Spadina, he was employing six people, and he had his own business. Now think of that. That's amazing when you go back into that time and that history, that someone had that kind of tenacity and that he did have that kind of tenacity.

But he also, as you heard—we heard this story a couple of times because it was a little fun, in that he wanted to serve and he did serve with a bomber unit, I

think, in England. But every time he went, they would refuse him. As you heard, he went to Hamilton. But, boy, he went back and back and back. Finally, and this was the chuckle, it was a Ukrainian recruiter who actually said, "Okay, enough is enough. I'm going to put you through." Because I'm of Ukrainian descent we had a little chuckle over that, but I knew it wasn't one of my grandparents because they were out west.

The thing was that he knew then, as that gentleman knew then, that there was discrimination and that unless they worked together and made a difference, that that discrimination would continue. So here we are, two immigrants, one actually born in Canada of an immigrant family and another probably an immigrant, who made a difference, because certainly he went to on serve, and serve his country well, in the Second World War.

And then he has the most extraordinary career, because, well, he got educated: Bachelor of Commerce, University of Toronto, 1950; Master of Business Administration from Harvard Business School, 1952; and law degree, 1958, from Osgoode. In 1971, he was named Queen's Counsel; in 1999, elected to the governing council of the Law Society of Upper Canada—just the beginning. In 1960, he was elected to the Etobicoke township board of education. There was our love of children—it really worked. In 1962, he was an alderman on the council. In 1963, he was, as you heard, the first black parliamentarian to be elected in Canada. He made history everywhere he went.

You heard that he spoke against that old race law; you heard that it was a bastion, a holdout, back in Essex county. In his gentle way—he didn't sort of get in here and thump the table and demand. He simply reminded his colleagues that segregation was long gone at the turn of the century and that they had to get up to date and change the statutes. And bless Bill Davis; he did it in the following year. He reminded them that the Underground Railway had brought the black slaves to Ontario for freedom and that freedom is not in a segregated school.

1530

An equal opportunity person always, he cared about everything he did in terms of that equity and access, when you talked to him. He "beat down the doors" was the quote—even though his door was always open—and he had good advice.

Some of you will remember Dixon Canada. We had a challenge with young Somali youths and we had a challenge with West Indian youths. They were actually fighting. We talked about, how do we find a way to work with both? It was Mr. Braithwaite's good wisdom that made a difference.

His community was important to him. He received numerous awards, every one of them justly deserved.

As you heard, he didn't give up. He practised law till he was 88.

Mr. Braithwaite was—and, David, he continues to be—an inspiration to many. He, with others, led the way. They opened the door. We will be forever grateful for the life of Leonard Braithwaite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all of the members for their very thoughtful and heartfelt comments in the tribute and to the family. We will make a DVD copy and the written Hansard available to the family as tribute to the family on the gift of their father. I thank all members for participating.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LORETTO LADIES' COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr25, An Act respecting The Loretto Ladies' Colleges and Schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS AMENDMENT ACT (PAPER BILLING STATEMENTS), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

(DOCUMENTS DE FACTURATION PAPIER)

Ms. Damerla moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 192, An Act to amend the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013 to require suppliers to provide billing statements in a paper format, free of charge, on request / Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2013 sur les conventions de services sans fil pour exiger que les fournisseurs remettent gratuitement, sur demande, des documents de facturation papier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: In plain English, all I'm trying to do—as many of you know, some telephone companies have started to charge you an extra \$2 or \$4 if you get a paper bill. I think it's plain wrong to charge somebody to tell them how much they owe you, so I am proposing that we ban cellphone companies from doing this and that they give paper bills for free.

PETITIONS

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the Credit Unions of Ontario for this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Thomas.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of the Credit Unions of Ontario and my good friends at the Windsor Family Credit Union. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I support the petition. I’ve affixed my name to it, and I’ll present it to page Ethan and send it up to the Clerk.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Shafiq Qadri: J’ai une pétition ici adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que la capacité de l’école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d’après la formule du ministère de l’Éducation;

« Attendu que l’effectif actuel de l’école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l’automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d’une nouvelle école pour désengorger l’école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale du CECCE;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario et le ministère de l’Éducation de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d’une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l’Éducation via les fonds en investissements d’immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d’Avalon à Orléans. »

Je vous l’envoie avec page Daniel.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: This one will be much shorter.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the cost of electricity in Ontario continues to escalate; and

“Whereas other charges associated with electricity, such as delivery, regulatory, global adjustment and debt retirement charges make electricity increasingly unaffordable; and

“Whereas these costs have imposed a significant hardship on ratepayers and driven industry and jobs out of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier and the Minister of Energy reduce the waste and duplication in Ontario’s electricity sector and take other necessary steps to lower the cost of electricity so that Ontario’s electricity prices are competitive with other jurisdictions.”

Speaker, I support this petition, sign it and send it down with page David.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are

being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s nursing homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Ethan.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.”

I agree, sign it and send it to you via page Ashley.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition to introduce here today. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the WSIB has mandated that, effective January 1, 2013, all independent contractors and small business owners operating in the construction industry must have WSIB coverage;

“Whereas many of these business owners have their own private workplace insurance that in most cases is

more affordable, more efficient and provides more extensive coverage;

“Whereas mandatory WSIB premiums add significant costs to small businesses and adversely affects their growth prospects and in some cases their solvency;....

“Whereas, at a time when Ontario is facing a jobs crisis with” hundreds of thousands of “people unemployed, the government and its agencies should not be discouraging private sector job creation and growth by levying additional, unnecessary costs;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct the Minister of Labour to issue an order in council eliminating the requirement that mandates compulsory WSIB coverage on all independent contractors and small business owners in the construction industry.”

Speaker, I fully support this and will sign it.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer’s disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia are seniors;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

“Whereas Ontario’s strategy for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature and give it to Victoria, the page.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J’ai une pétition ici adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que la capacité de l’école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d’après la formule du ministère de l’Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale du CECCE;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Je vous l'envoie avec page Frank.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

It's signed by the three credit unions in my riding, and even my own hometown by Sue Strong. I'll hand this to page Zahra.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands;

"Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike;

"Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

"Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to add my name to the hundreds and give it to Ethan.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Phil McNeely: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale du CECCE;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Je soumetts la pétition avec Ethan. Merci, Ethan.

1550

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas energy costs have skyrocketed as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power

Generation and the unaffordable subsidies of wind and solar projects will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas Ontario's average cost of electricity is highest in Canada; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity and heating fuel is straining family budgets and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately eliminate subsidies for wind and solar, ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable energy."

I support this petition 100% and give it to page Daniel to take to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario families already pay \$9,970 a year in government paycheque deductions in addition to their personal income taxes—including employment insurance (EI), pension and health tax deductions—and as a result families cannot afford any new payroll taxes during these uncertain economic times; and

That new payroll taxes would significantly lower take-home pay, lead to immediate layoffs and keep youth from finding work;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario agrees that payroll taxes and paycheque deductions are a direct tax on the middle class and that no new government programs, like an Ontario pension plan, should be funded by new payroll taxes. Addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to begin my remarks by going back to the start of this year and the pre-budget hearings that took place across Ontario. We heard three main themes over and over from Ontarians: We need lower taxes, affordable energy and less job-killing red tape. The Premier's proposal in the upcoming budget for an Ontario pension plan flies directly in the face of that advice. It's not the only advice she's ignoring, but we'll come back to that in a couple of minutes.

Earlier today, the Ontario PC caucus presented more documents containing formerly confidential advice to Premier Wynne from the Ministry of Finance. These documents warned Premier Wynne that of all her pro-

posed revenue tools, payroll taxes would have the "largest negative impact" on employment. In fact, the Ministry of Finance calculated that for every \$2-billion increase in Ontario payroll taxes, 18,000 people would lose their jobs. The ministry warns that the consequences will be lower business investment, relocation of business to other jurisdictions, reduced work effort and "out-migration of people."

Speaker, I do want to repeat one section there. These documents warned Premier Wynne that of all her proposed revenue tools, payroll taxes would have the "largest negative impact" on employment.

Ontario's 2014 budget will include a proposal for a massive new Ontario retirement pension plan based on the Canada Pension Plan and funded by new payroll taxes. Canadian workers and employers contribute \$42 billion a year nationwide to the Canadian pension plan; Ontario's share of these annual contributions is roughly \$16.5 billion. Using the Ministry of Finance's own assertion, that for every \$2-billion increase in payroll taxes we eliminate 18,000 jobs, that would mean the payroll taxes necessary to fund this massive new Liberal pension scheme, based on CPP, would therefore lead to 150,000 job losses across the province. That's from the Ministry of Finance's confidential advice to the Premier.

In moving ahead with this, Kathleen Wynne is ignoring the advice of her own Ministry of Finance experts, her own transit panel experts, and even her own hand-picked pension adviser, former Prime Minister Paul Martin, who stated, "Payroll taxes are a cancer on job creation."

Considering Ontario already has the highest payroll taxes in Canada, she's also ignoring the advice of Ontario's job creators. Here's what they had to say about these increased payroll taxes.

First is the Toronto Region Board of Trade, who said, "The prime concern with payroll taxes was economic in nature. For many groups and organizations, the tool was seen negatively as a tax on employment."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce said, "An employer payroll tax could discourage firms from hiring new employees."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said, "Contemplating new forms of taxation to add to that burden will not make these businesses more competitive, nor will it increase their ability to create jobs for Ontarians."

Why should we be surprised? It's hardly the first time the Wynne government has been willing to ignore the facts when it comes to Ontario's finances.

Yesterday, our leader, Tim Hudak, and I presented previously confidential documents turned over to the estimates committee. A slide deck titled "Fiscal Plan Information," dated February 13, 2013, includes inset boxes of commentary from ministry staff prepared for use by the Premier and her cabinet.

On page 8 is a graphic entitled "Ontario's Fiscal Targets to Balance," which starts with a \$24.7-billion deficit reported for 2009-10. The comment box directly

addresses this figure. It states: “\$24.7 billion was never a real expectation. It was a deliberate policy to print what can only be described as a worst case scenario.” It goes on to say, “The path to balance was then drawn from there, assuming a straight-line trajectory of declining deficits.”

In other words, they made the numbers up. They started with a fake number of \$24.7 billion, had a notional number of zero, drew a straight line, and then filled in all the bars. That’s how this government created our budget and that’s how they plan to spend taxpayers’ dollars. I’ve never seen anything like this in my entire business career.

The worst part in all of this is that the Premier and the cabinet knew this. They were told this on February 13, yet they still went ahead and presented this phony \$24.7-billion figure in the 2013 budget, only a few short days later. They knew they had no plan and they knew that their numbers simply did not add up. Just as they did with the \$4.5-billion fiscal gap that we revealed last month with previously confidential documents, they told the Legislature they were on track to balance the budget when they knew that was not the case. This is clear evidence that Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals can’t be trusted with the money of Ontario taxpayers and can’t be trusted to be honest with Ontarians about the precarious state of our finances.

This plan to increase payroll taxes under the guise of helping Ontarians is the latest Liberal cash grab, plain and simple. It’s ridiculous that this government continues to try to excuse their own fiscal mismanagement by pretending it’s all a revenue shortfall and then trying to sell added spending as some kind of benevolent stimulus program.

Here are some facts: As of last summer’s 2012-13 public accounts, revenue was actually up a shocking 18.4% in the three years since 2009-10. It was \$95.8 billion, now up to \$113.4 billion. They don’t have a revenue problem; they have a spending problem. That’s 6% a year revenue growth—a whole lot higher than economic growth and a whole lot more than families are living on, and they still went out and spent \$125 billion.

1600

During the same period, the federal government’s revenue grew more slowly than Ontario’s, yet the federal government’s budget is essentially balanced, while Ontario’s deficits are growing: more than \$2 billion more deficit than the \$9.2-billion shameful deficit last year.

The government claims that revenues have been falling short of expectations. That’s just not true. The 2010 budget projected revenue for 2012-13 to be \$112 billion. It actually came in at \$113.4 billion, higher than the 2010 forecast.

The spending announcements the government has been making, as outlined in another leaked document—the BLT, the budget-leaking team—are permanent increases in the cost of government. This isn’t just \$5.7 billion in new one-time spending; these are permanent increases. None of this spending is short-term. Practically

all of it is permanent and, in fact, the cost of most of it will actually grow over time.

There is no plan here but spend, spend, spend. It has nothing to do with jobs and everything to do with trying to buy another election with borrowed money—sounds familiar to the gas plant scandal. In the end, risky, out-of-control government spending actually costs us jobs.

It’s under this premise that the Wynne Liberals want to increase payroll taxes through this pension plan scheme, which your own finance ministry experts—these are her own experts whom she asked advice of; they’ve told her it will cost tens of thousands of jobs if she does it. In fact, the finance ministry, the infrastructure ministry and the transportation ministry all said that it will cost Ontarians 150,000 jobs.

The Liberals will say or do anything to skate past the next election. Kathleen Wynne is promising a massive new Ontario retirement pension plan to save her own job, not to create new jobs for others.

The Liberals and the NDP will have the opportunity to support my motion and reject a new and higher payroll tax that will cost Ontario 150,000 jobs. It’s time they stand up for the interests of Ontarians, not for their own political interest. Stand up for taxpayers for once. Support my motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for High Park—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Don’t forget half of my riding, Madam Speaker. It’s a wonderful half, too.

I’m always proud to stand in this House. It truly is an honour to represent the people of my riding and, in fact, Ontarians. To respond to the Progressive Conservative motion: I think it’s somewhat strange that a motion has come forward from the party to my right about a pension plan that hasn’t been tabled yet.

It’s an extremely ideological motion. It doesn’t really further the cause of taxpayers, and I’ll be upfront by saying that that’s the reason we’re going to abstain from voting for it at all. We don’t take it seriously.

What we do take seriously in the New Democratic Party is the plight of Ontarians—two thirds of them—who don’t have any retirement pension plans. It’s interesting; I was watching the attack ads, the sort of smear campaign that the Liberal Party is running right now on television programs near you, and one of the things they say comes out of the mouth of the Premier—which I think is sad. I think it demeans the status of our jobs and it demeans the status of this Legislature when a Premier says something on television that is blatantly untrue. What does she say? She says that she’s going to be putting forward a pension plan that the New Democratic Party will not support. The actual truth—this is in Hansard—is that four years ago we were the ones that put forward an Ontario pension plan in response to the reality that it did not look, at the time—and now it has been proven to be so—like the federal government was

going to come through with a CPP enhancement. So it was actually our idea.

It's one thing to have an idea and to have it acted upon—some might say “borrowed”; put into practice. That's good. That's fine. I'm not upset; in fact, I'm flattered—imitation is the best form of flattery—if the government takes one of our ideas and puts it into place. But in this instance, not only did they not put it into place—and who knows what will be coming on Thursday?—but they actually put words into our mouths that we never said, which is that we're not going to support whatever they bring in. How would we support it or not support it? We don't know what it is. Apparently the Conservatives feel they have a better handle on this, but simply to say that we aren't supportive of it, period, and to broadcast this is shocking. It's absolutely shocking.

There was another piece of mail that got dropped off at the subway stations, again with the same shocking inaccuracies. I think it's egregious; I think it's sad. I'm a United Church minister, as many folks know, but it doesn't take a United Church minister to know what is ethically okay, what is ethically right and what is ethically not. That's why I'm sad about it. I'm sadder about it than I am upset about it.

I suppose I should, Mr. Speaker, be expecting such smear campaigns. After all, when I was elected in a by-election some eight years ago, I was elected despite a smear campaign run against me by the Liberal Party. So the fact that this campaign, if there should be one, seems to be starting off on the same note against everyone in the New Democratic Party should be no surprise, but it is a surprise, because, honestly, I think I expected better and I think the voters in Ontario expected better.

What is the status of the voter in Ontario? Well, they're far worse off. That's the simple reality, and I think, to be fair to my colleagues to the right, that's the reality they're responding to. They're far worse off than they were 11 years ago. There's no question about that. Their hydro rates have skyrocketed, their costs of energy have skyrocketed, job numbers have plummeted, poverty rates have skyrocketed under this government's watch, and for 11 years this has been the case.

Now, in the 11th hour of the 11th year, as it were, we're hearing promises. We've been seeing what really results in election campaign promises put forward as bills—bills that would never have a chance of passing. When you put forward a bill a day, you know the legislative process takes some time—and this government has been putting forward about a bill a day until the last few weeks, in which case they've been putting forward a promise an hour, and every promise seems to be pricier than the last: a billion dollars here, a billion dollars there.

When I talk to people in my riding, what I'm hearing is that the bloom is off the rose, as they say. People just don't buy it anymore. They just don't believe it, because they've been hearing the same things for 11 years and they're not seeing the results. They're not seeing the real results in their lives. They're just hearing more empty promises.

To my colleagues to the right, who always claim—and they claim this historically, even though it's inaccurate—that they are the party of fiscal responsibility, I say this: Fifty years ago, Tommy Douglas brought in, I think, 17 balanced budgets. He saw it as a priority to balance a budget, because he knew that if you don't balance the budget, you're giving people's money to the banks and you're not putting it back into social programs. That's what Tommy Douglas did. That was the origin of our party.

Overall, with one exception—I'll talk about the one exception—our provincial governments have been the best fiscal managers of them all. That is history. That is simply incontrovertible history. I'm going to repeat that. Our provincial governments have the best history of fiscal management of all the parties; second, the Progressive Conservatives—

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—and a distant third, the Liberal Party, which I think protests too much.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What was the exception?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To my friend across the way, the Minister of Community and Social Services: The exception was, of course, their own Bob Rae, a former leader of the Liberal Party, who—one could not be surprised, perhaps—ran a deficit. He ran a deficit provincially and then went on to be the Liberal Party leader—I think that's what it takes—and, suffice to say, governed like a Liberal. That's the simple historic reality.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I would repeat this over and over again, because somehow it doesn't make its way out there into the general public the way it should: that the best fiscal managers are the New Democratic Party historically; that the worst are the Liberal Party; and that somewhere in the middle are the Progressive Conservatives.

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Again, to correct an inaccuracy which seems to be out there—one can surmise the source of the inaccuracy—that we are against revenue tools to pay for essential services, what nonsense—what absolute and patent nonsense. We have never said that. What we have been against in the New Democratic Party are regressive taxes, unfair taxes against people who cannot afford to pay for them. What we have always stood, for over the years—province to province, again, with a possible exception—are modest increases to corporate taxes. As our leader, Andrea Horwath, said, modest increases to those who make over \$500,000 a year—that's what we've said. Not to mention a reining-in of—since I've been elected, over eight years—over \$3 billion of absolute waste.

Where has that waste gone? Well, remember eHealth? Actually, I'll go back even further than eHealth, to the first year when I was elected. Remember Colleague? Remember \$35 million out the back door, that was dumped? A million dollars to a cricket club; do we remember that? Some \$35 million. There is some evidence that that kind of dumping at year-end is still going on, but that was my introduction to this place.

Then came eHealth and then came Ornge and then came the gas plants scandal. One could argue that each and every one of those billion-dollar boondoggles was really, again, something that hurt who? Not, of course, the overpaid friends of the government who got the jobs in these various establishments, but the average people, ordinary Ontarians, who see the result on their bills, who see the result on their taxes. That's the problem. That really is the problem.

It's not only that they run deficits; it's the deficits they run, Mr. Speaker. Where is the money going? I can say that \$3 billion of it—and that's just the beginning—has gone for absolutely nothing, unless you count political gain. The Premier has admitted as much—which, again, I don't gloat about. I think this is rather sad. This is a sad commentary on this Parliament. It's a sad commentary upon our jobs. No wonder the voters are cynical when they see this happening by their very own government. It's sad.

Again, to get back to the motion that's being made, it's about a provincial pension plan that, as far as we know, doesn't exist yet—we haven't seen it; we don't know what it is—that the Liberals claim is theirs, which of course has nothing to do with us. Of course, we introduced an Ontario pension plan—a much, one would surmise, fairer one—four years ago, at which time, Mr. Speaker, I have to say, every single one of them voted against it, including Kathleen Wynne. They voted against it. But times have changed. Now we're on the eve of an election, they need something that will be popular. But here's what's so sad—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: You won't vote against ours, will you? It's in the budget.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, to my friend the Minister of Community and Social Services I say, when it comes out of the Premier's mouth, such an absolutely gross inaccuracy in an ad on television, that we don't support an Ontario provincial pension plan—one shudders at that when, in fact, we were the ones who introduced it. One has to ask, when something like that is made so public—I mean, there are other inaccuracies too. And the latest, by the way, of course, that we've heard is about the infrastructure at Herb Gray.

Every day it seems there is another scandal at this point. Every day there is yet another reason to doubt the veracity of what comes out of the Liberal Party's mouths, collectively and individually. It's sad, but that is the perception out there. That is, no doubt, the perception out there. People don't believe it anymore, because they've seen how it has rolled out in the past. They've seen a Premier say, "Oh, it only cost \$200 million." "Oh, it only cost"—I can't even remember the figures. In fact, it cost over a billion to move the gas plants.

They've seen a Premier talk about her support for transit and then take \$4 billion out of Transit City, basically crashing and burning Transit City. They've seen a Premier now on television saying that our party wouldn't support an Ontario provincial pension plan, when the facts are absolutely the opposite. And of course,

to the right, they have seen a Conservative Party that simply is happy to stand on the sidelines and point fingers, but refuses to read budgets, refuses to come to the table, refuses to have any gains made for the people of Ontario.

And again, we actually point to the facts, what's actually happened. I'm just going to reiterate because my friend the House leader, the member from Timmins—James Bay, is going to be taking some time as well on this. But the facts: First and foremost, the Conservatives have introduced a motion attacking a pension plan that nobody has seen yet, that is simply a promise—something in the air.

The Liberals are talking about this so-called pension plan. We haven't seen it. Nobody has seen it. We don't know what it looks like, but they're using it as an attack against us, saying we don't support it, which is ludicrous since it was our idea in the first place, four years ago. That's what this motion is about.

Obviously, it's ideological. Obviously, it has nothing to do with helping the person who is looking at their hydro bill as we speak or looking at their energy bill or looking at the fact that their child has no job after graduating with a degree. It's not going to help them. It's ideological, therefore we won't reject it or accept it. We dismiss it. It's silly. That's what it is: It's silly.

To my friends across the aisle in government, the reason for the profound cynicism in this province right now is exactly because of the way that they've handled money. The very precious dollars that come from families across this province—from working families, from middle-class families—who have done their best but see people at Ornge and eHealth making, in many cases, millions and look at their own economic fate—it's not nearly so rosy.

Again to that point, which I cannot ever stress enough, because it certainly goes against the spin that's out there, I ask rhetorically: Who is the best manager of money when they are in government? Which party runs the fewest deficits, balances the most budgets? Who does that? That would be the New Democratic Party. Who is the worst? The Liberal Party. Who is second worst? The Progressive Conservative Party. Who is the one exception to the rule that the NDP is the best manager of money? The Bob Rae government—Bob Rae, a Liberal.

That is the simple historical truth. I defy you to prove me wrong. Of course, the one who introduced medicare to this province, Tommy Douglas, released 17 balanced budgets. So that's proof you don't have to attack working people, you don't have to undercut collective bargaining and you don't have to cut back on social services. You know what? You can have reasonable taxes on those who can afford them, and not tax those who can't, and balance a budget and have social services—something, I will close with, neither the Progressive Conservatives nor their friends in the Liberal Party have ever achieved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Now, wasn't that a very interesting history lesson? What we learned is that there's only been

one Ontario NDP government in history. It never balanced a budget, and somehow or other that makes them the best fiscal managers in Ontario history. I don't quite connect the dots that way, but if you subtract a lot of the rhetoric, I actually get the impression that our colleagues in the NDP may be philosophically aligned with those of us over here in the government, but there is another point that they made.

They made a very important point: This is a motion that criticizes what may be a budget proposal in a budget that hasn't been tabled that the Conservatives haven't seen. It presumes to take issue with and criticize a proposal that's never been before this Legislature and won't be tabled until this Thursday, May 1 at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

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But it does bring you back, with a sense of historical perspective, some—what would that be now?—51 years to a federal Liberal minority government, under Lester Pearson, that proposed the then Canada Pension Plan. It was the Conservatives of the day who railed against the proposed Liberal pension plan and called it everything in the book—socialism, I think, was one of the milder ones. So I guess it would be fair to call this opposition day issue a Diefen-brown-motion.

Even at that, Speaker, I sometimes wonder why it is that the PC Party, which hasn't even read the budget, has decided to criticize a portion of it that they haven't seen. It is, however, completely consistent with what we saw in 2012 and 2013, when the PC Party, a once proud institution in this province that has fallen into some degree of disrepair, for two consecutive years declared that it was completely opposed to the government's budget before they even saw it—not just before it was read in the Legislature, but before they even had a chance to see it in the budget lock-up.

Speaker, May 5 next week represents the filing deadline for our 2013 income taxes. As Canadians, most of us find some way to put aside some money for our post-retirement years in our registered retirement savings plans. If you believe the completely weird, neo-conservative motion before this House today, then you would consider your RRSP contribution to be a tax.

In fact, although this motion drips with the usual imported Tea Party venom that implies that people get no value from anything they pay in deductions or taxes, I think you should try to explain that to, for example, police officers, firefighters and first responders, whose livelihoods are made possible because people agree that paying taxes to get a safer society is a fair trade-off. They could try explaining the rationale behind this motion to people in the health care sector. They could try telling them that their career has no worth because everything, from the place that they work to the wages they receive, is paid for in taxes and donations, but mostly taxes. Or they could advocate the American-style free market model, where Americans, to get far less than what we receive in health care, most of which is consumed in your post-retirement years, pay somewhere between 10 and 20

times what we pay here. That's a wonderful free market system, I'm sure, but quite frankly, Americans wish they had it as good as we have it here.

That's why, Speaker, as a Liberal, I'm just finding it impossible to support anything like this presumptive PC motion.

The PC Party, whose underlying message is always that you'd better be prepared to work for less, with few, if any, benefits, is also saying that after a lifetime of work, you'd better be prepared to live on a Canada Pension Plan capped at \$12,500 per year, plus your RRSP, whatever you have in it, your old age security and whatever equity you have in your home and your possessions. But what we've found is that that's just not enough for Canadians.

Since when did the freedom to save for your own retirement become a tax? Since when could employers feel free to take the money that they used to set aside as matching contributions to their employees' pension plans and call that a tax? Well, the answer is that Ontarians are not as short-sighted or as ideologically driven as the Ontario Tea Party considers them to be; and the answer to "Since when" is, in fact, never.

Speaker, we understand that the Ontario PC Party doesn't support helping people and their employers prepare for retirement. We get that. That's what this motion is all about. As a government, we believe they're wrong. As a party, we believe in lifting people up rather than fleecing them of their homes and their possessions after they've stopped working.

As one of the generation of baby boomers, I'm appalled by this short-sighted transfer of wealth from the needy to the greedy. We were sent here as legislators to lead, not to abdicate leadership, as this motion would do. As Ontarians, the share of our GDP composed of taxation has been falling for many years, and in North America has not been as low since early in the 20th century.

To go back as far as 2010, Ontario has publicly supported a modest, phased-in and fully funded enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan. Indeed, it was at the December 2012 finance ministers' meetings that the provinces and the federal government did agree to continue discussions on a modest CPP enhancement. It is, in fact, the feds that should be taking leadership on this, but the provinces have woken up. Indeed, an entire generation of all of us born from just after World War II until about the mid-1960s has said, "You know, we have got to be able to look after ourselves, and we've got to empower our children and their children to be able to look after themselves in their retirement. The status quo isn't enough."

Back in the days when the CPP was originally conceived, the average age for a man would be somewhere between 68 and maybe about the mid-seventies; for a woman, about five to seven years longer. A man would typically retire in his mid-sixties and would be shaking hands with the Almighty sometime in his early to mid-seventies. That, at the time, was what you built your pension plan assumptions around. For a woman, it was an extra five to seven years.

Today, it's routine that people will live healthy, productive lives well into their eighties. For all of us who visit our neighbours in seniors' residences and long-term-care homes, if we were alive during centennial year, we can remember that you could count the centenarians during centennial year, those people who were older than Canada, on the fingers of two hands, I think it was. Today, you'll find one, two, three or sometimes four in every single seniors' home. We're living longer. We've got to make better provisions for ourselves and for our children's and grandchildren's generations to be able to prepare for their retirement.

This is probably not a perfect proposal. It's way better than what we've been able to work out with the feds. It is in the direction of where the provinces would like to go, and it's certainly in the direction that men and women in our Ontario in this the year 2014 would like to see us as a government help them prepare for. It's about people's futures.

That's why this opposition day motion doesn't deserve the support of the government and why I will be voting against it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to the motion brought forward by our party's finance critic, the member from Nipissing. It is a motion I am very happy to support.

It is especially fitting that we are debating this motion just 48 hours before the 2014 budget arrives. Of course, this motion is relevant because it speaks to the state of the province after 11 years of Liberal government and to the economic stagnation with which we are all too familiar.

The jobs crisis has deprived more than 300,000 people of good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector. The government's response has been to add 300,000 people to the public service payroll. The government has doubled the province's debt in 10 years, and its plan for deficit reduction has been to run the numbers higher and higher.

The member from Nipissing himself has revealed that the Wynne Liberals have known for well over a year that their fiscal plan has veered wildly off course. He has proven that the Premier and her cabinet kept secret a \$4.5-billion hole in their fiscal projections.

Just yesterday, we heard another warning about the government's fiscal bungling from the province's Auditor General. Because Ontario Liberals had no economic development strategy, they put all their chips on gaming expansion as a strategy for erasing the deficit. Yesterday, the Auditor General revealed that this was blind hope and the revenue stream recklessly overstated. In their rush to get their hands on taxpayers' money, Ontario Liberals failed in their duty to review the OLG plan with a critical eye. The Auditor General now estimates that this unrealistic forecast pokes another hole in the province's balance sheet, leaving it up to \$2.8 billion behind.

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Again and again, whether through waste, mismanagement or simple incompetence, Ontario Liberals have

watched billions of dollars simply vanish from the province's revenue stream. This is the same government that proposes to offer its wisdom on financial matters to the people of Ontario. I would suggest that Ontario Liberals have a credibility gap when it comes to responsible, long-term planning.

Earlier, the member from Nipissing summed up some of the expert advice to this government with regard to payroll taxes. He revealed confidential advice warning that for every \$2-billion increase in payroll taxes, 18,000 workers stood to lose their jobs. It is a devastating price to pay, and it is advice that government should heed.

I would add that the Toronto Region Board of Trade took payroll taxes off the table when looking at transit funding. It was seen as a negative burden that would cause employers to employ fewer people or simply relocate to another jurisdiction.

When KPMG evaluated Metrolinx's Big Move revenue tools in March 2013, they red-flagged what would be called the distributional impacts of payroll taxes. It might be helpful to have some of KPMG's evaluations read into the record: "Employers in the affected regions may choose to relocate operations or employ less people if the tax creates excessive additional costs." They continue: "The tax has the potential to reduce the competitiveness of businesses in the GTHA with potential costs resulting from reduced employment or relocation of businesses. It may also reduce the attractiveness of the GTHA as a location for new investments. It is well known that the economic distortions which arise from higher payroll taxes include reductions in hours worked and lower labour force participation, because the return to working declines with the net-of-tax wage."

KPMG found that other changes in economic behaviour also result in inefficiency costs, including reduced work effort, reduced investment in human capital, and changes in the mix of compensation received—in other words, pay packages that shift value to benefits that are not subject to payroll taxes, as well as non-monetary forms of compensation.

In that March 2013 report, KPMG also noted that "an increase in payroll taxes equivalent to 1% of GDP in revenue terms would entail a 0.66% drop in steady-state GDP for Canada as a whole. When applied to the GTHA or even to the province of Ontario, this would imply a larger negative impact on GDP because the jurisdiction is smaller and hence, there is more room for firms and workers to reduce their payroll tax exposure by changing the location of economic activity. Higher payroll taxes could also lead to the relocation of economic activity outside the GTHA and increased unemployment in the GTHA. The resulting reduction in economic activity could represent a significant cost to the GTHA community."

These are very significant considerations and ones that, if the Liberals' reckless plans are implemented, will potentially become a permanent drag on the province's competitive prospects. Ontario already has the highest

payroll taxes in Canada. On average, families pay almost \$10,000 a year in payroll taxes in addition to their personal income tax.

Roughly 600,000 people are currently out of work in Ontario. The province's unemployment rate has been soaring above the national average for 88 months—so that's seven years and four months—which is scandalous. Worse, those jobs created are often not as secure as the jobs that they are replacing.

Since 2009, the number of underemployed workers has exceeded the number of unemployed workers. Temporary jobs have increased at three times the rate of permanent positions, and a third of all part-time workers in Ontario are involuntary. They are people working part-time who would rather be working full-time, if only there was full-time work available.

Premier Wynne has cautioned that there is a huge economic crisis coming if we don't address this issue of improved pension benefits. Speaker, I would contend that we are already undergoing a huge economic crisis today. We will potentially be facing a crisis that is far more severe if the Premier refuses to wake up to the practical realities of the day. I would ask her to give sober second thought to the profoundly negative consequences that go hand in hand with new payroll taxes.

Speaker, the status quo is not working. It should surprise no one that workers struggle to keep their heads above water and are never going to be able to give RRSPs their undivided attention. There are many such workers. Ontario's labour market is not delivering the hours of income that help create economic security. That is the problem her government should be fully focused on solving. That is the true generational challenge the government should be dealing with.

Since the recession, Ontario's unemployed have, on average, remained jobless five and a half weeks longer than they did before the recession. Last year, the average length of unemployment in Ontario was almost 22 weeks. In the United States, the average unemployment duration is now a full month below the current Ontario average. That is the Ontario Liberal legacy, I guess, Speaker. This Liberal government has no turnaround plan, and the people of this province are paying a high price because of the reckless spending and aimless policies.

We can do better. The Ontario PCs have a bold plan to put well-paying jobs first and ensure a bright future for our young people. Our million-jobs plan would balance the budget quickly and reduce taxes on employers so they can hire again. We would ensure that energy is affordable so that we can create jobs, not destroy them. We would train more skilled workers to meet the demand in trades and help our young people find good jobs that give them hope for tomorrow.

We all want a better, stronger Ontario, a place for more jobs and opportunities, a province we can all be truly proud of. To do that, the government needs to focus on reducing wasteful spending, balancing the budget and restoring confidence in Ontario's economy.

Only Ontario PCs have a turnaround plan for Ontario and a plan to create new and better-paying jobs without

increasing taxes. We will take the necessary steps now to plan for a better tomorrow so that we can get this province back on the road to greatness again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to take the opportunity, in this opposition day motion, to lay out where New Democrats think that the vision of Ontario should be and why we think it's different than what both the Liberals and the Conservatives are doing when it comes to their particular approach. Let me just start with the government, only because they are the government and we should start from that point.

One thing is really clear: If you take a look in all of our constituencies—I don't care where your riding is—people back home are starting to feel the pinch more and more every day as a result of many of the decisions that this government has taken. I have talked to I don't know how many constituents—and I'm sure it's the same with government members and opposition members from both parties—when it comes to the price of hydro. Constituents are saying, "I can't afford it anymore. The price of my hydro bill has gone up exponentially by over 100% since this government has taken office," and they're looking at their hydro bills going up yet again. We saw an increase on May 1, of our hydro bills going up. We saw the government's Minister of Energy say, "Oh, it's not a big deal; it's only the price of a coffee." Well, in reality, it's not the price of a coffee. People are paying more for hydro now than they ever have in the past. We're paying more than any other jurisdiction, at least in Canada, if not in North America. People are really feeling squeezed when it comes to the ability to make ends meet at the end of the month.

To make matters worse, Ontario Hydro, with this billing system that they've got where they've changed their computer software programs, has created all kinds of havoc for constituents across the province. I've got people in my constituency who receive bills for \$20,000 and \$30,000 for hydro that they didn't use. Then they spend the next six to eight months, between ourselves and them, the Ombudsman, and the office of the president of hydro, trying to fix these muck-ups that have happened when it comes to their hydro bill. It's just really disconcerting to people. Imagine you're a small business person and you've received a hydro bill in excess of \$30,000 for hydro that you didn't use. You say, "How am I going to pay for that?" In a small business, it's the difference between keeping their doors open and keeping their doors closed.

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Of course, I'd be remiss to not talk about what happened with hydro and high hydro rates when it came to the city of Timmins. We lost our Xstrata smelter refinery as a result of high hydro prices that this government encouraged by way of the policies that they've established, and it was started under the Tories, I would say, under the deregulation of Ontario Hydro and moved towards what eventually the Liberals accelerated. Now

what we have is that it became so expensive in Ontario for a refinery that uses electricity as a means of energy to melt the natural resource into a finished product that they closed down the plant and they moved to Noranda. Why? Because you can buy hydro in Noranda at half the price. So here we are creating an economic disadvantage for the people and the companies in this province beyond the pale.

I'd just say, when it comes to what this government has done just on the hydro file, it is really disconcerting what it's meant to people in their everyday life.

Not to speak about, when this government was first elected, they made a big pledge. Dalton McGuinty, remember? "I will not raise taxes." He did the pledge. One of the first things he did when he came to government is, he raised the HST, and New Democrats at the time said, "God no, don't do that." I know that there are some people within my party who said we should: "Well, we should look at that and we should support the increase in taxes."

I think we need to be careful about who pays those taxes and how we pay them, and to make sure that it's fair. The problem with the HST is that those people who could least afford to pay are those who got socked with having to pay that tax. We, as New Democrats, had a great problem here in the caucus with that because we saw it yet again as a shifting of the burden of taxation from those who could most afford to pay to those who can least afford to pay. My colleague, the whip for the NDP, made some very good points along that line.

We, as New Democrats, have always said we have never been, as a party, opposed to the issue of taxation because we understand that taxation is how you pay for those things that Ontarians want: health care, education, our roads etc., but it's who pays the tax. If you look at what new Democrats have done under Andrea Horwath, it's been pretty darn clear.

During the first budget negotiations with Mr. McGuinty, when this minority Parliament came back, we proposed a fairness tax. We said, "Let's tax those people"—over \$500,000 a year—"who can afford to pay the tax, and generate revenue that's necessary in order to bring down the deficit, because we need to balance our books." At one point, if the credit card isn't paid, you just stop being able to purchase. So we said, "Let's do a fairness tax in order that those people in Ontario who can most afford to pay those taxes pay them," so that we can make sure we can fund those programs that are very important, like health care and education, and we can work at reducing the debt.

You will see that not long ago—I think it was last week—our leader, Andrea Horwath, on behalf of our caucus, talked about an investment in transit, about how transit is not just the city of Toronto, as we understand, but it's cities and towns across this province and it's about regions across this province. We said we shouldn't do an emphasis just to do a fix for transit in one community; we should look at Ontario and we should have an investment that allows us to make sure that there are

proper GO services to places like London and Waterloo, that there is train service restored to the city of Timmins, that we have services in Niagara, that we have electrification of trains all the way from downtown Union Station over to the airport. That's going to cost money to make. We said that we believe there's room, a modest increase in the corporate tax, in order to be able to make part of the money that's necessary to be able to pay for those things.

As well, we said, "Listen, it is preposterous that this government is going to give a billion and a half dollars away on HST inputs to companies in this province." It's money that they're already paying. It's not as if they're going to miss it. And we, as a result of the deal that this Liberal government has negotiated with Mister—I was going to call him Mulroney, but the Prime Minister—Mr. Harper in Ottawa, are going to give a billion and a half dollars back to the corporate sector, back to businesses. And I'm not talking small business here; this is really corporate Ontario that is going to get a billion and a half dollars back by way of HST input. Is that fair? We're saying that "taxation" is not a bad word; it's a question of who pays. What we've seen over the years has been a shift from taxes being paid by those who could most afford to pay, to the taxes by and large being the responsibility of and having to be paid by people who can least afford to pay. The other thing that we said—and we're quite categorical—is that we will not support in this budget any increases of taxes on the middle class.

It is an approach that we think is balanced. What Andrea Horwath has said is that we need to recognize that those who can least afford to pay need respite. We have said, in fact, that we would not support a budget, or any initiative, that would increase personal income tax or taxes on the middle class, and we believe that there has to be a little bit of a shift so that those who can most afford to pay, pay their fair share of taxes. So I say to my friends in the Conservative caucus: The motion, as you've written it—I think we have to just take it as somewhat laughable. The Tories, over the last two and a half years of this minority Parliament, have done one huge error, in my view. They forgot what the people decided on election day. People on election day said, "This is a minority Parliament." They said, "Yes, we are putting the Liberals in the penalty box. We are not giving them a majority government." But neither did they give the Conservatives or the NDP the reward of majority government. They said, "We're setting all of you back, in order to be able to work together to do what's right for Ontarians."

What I think New Democrats have tried to do over the last two and a half years, and will continue to do, is to look at each item and to say: What does this mean for the people back home? What does this mean to the businesses and corporate sector in Ontario? How is this going to benefit Ontario? And so we have taken some positions that have not been easy to take at times, such as supporting the first two budgets by way of making agreements with the Liberals on both those budgets, because we

thought it was the right thing to do. The Conservatives took the position, "Oh, no. The only thing we do is say no. We don't read anything. We don't study anything. We don't look at anybody else's proposals. We just say no." And that's what this motion is basically about. It's another "no" before they got to read anything. How responsible is it—you have to ask yourself the question—when a political party, in this case the official opposition, is saying no to something they haven't even seen? It seems to me that that is the wrong approach. The people of Ontario sent us here and said, "This is a minority Parliament. You shall figure out how to make it work." This Parliament at one point is either going to run its course or it will be defeated. That is the process by which minority Parliaments work. But while we're here, we need to ensure that we do the right thing for the people back home.

New Democrats, to the point that the Conservatives are making, have long argued, and will continue to argue—and we will be champions on fair taxation. I am proud to be a member of this caucus who, in the first budget, said it is a fairer thing to do to have a fairness tax for those people over \$500,000, that we shift some of that responsibility to those who most can pay. I'm proud to be a member of a caucus and having a leader like Andrea Horwath who has said, "You know what? If we're going to pay for transportation across Ontario, we need to find some revenue and we need to find some savings. On the revenue side, a very small increase on the corporate tax rate will not hurt, because we are the most competitive jurisdiction when it comes to corporate taxes." I am proud that we've taken the position that we shall not allow the HST inputs to be passed on, because this is money that Ontario can ill afford to give. Can you imagine, you have a credit card bill of whatever it is, and all of a sudden you take away income that you may have to pay your credit card bill? That's essentially what these guys are doing.

I'm also very proud, as a New Democrat, to have suggested earlier this spring that there should be a reduction in small business taxes. The NDP government in Manitoba has recognized and has moved to 0% tax on small businesses. Because if you're going to try to encourage one sector of your economy to be able to invest and to be able to grow, that's the sector of the economy that needs the most help. You know, I've got nothing against any large corporation. As many of you know, I frequent with a number of them—mining, forestry, energy. I've been around here a long time. I know many CEOs, I know many boards and managers of mills, and different companies on a first-name basis. I don't begrudge them trying to run a good operation and making a profit. But I'll tell you, it's not that large corporation that needs the biggest break; it's the small business owner who is working hard, he or she, to be able, through the sweat of their brow, to build something for them and their families and their community. I'm proud to be a member of a caucus under Andrea Horwath that says, "Hey, we've got to help the small business

sector, and we're prepared to roll out a reduction on the small business tax in order to be able to assist that particular sector."

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New Democrats understand that it's about fair taxation. The Tories taking the position that they're taking in this motion is akin to what they've done for the last two and half years: no to absolutely everything. "I don't want to read nothing; I don't want to see nothing"—it's like Schultz in the old Stalag 13 series—Hogan's Heroes.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Stalag 13.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Stalag 13 was the other one; that's right. "I see nothing; I know nothing": It's like Schultz. These guys are just not responsible when it comes to the responsibility they were given by the people of Ontario.

As for the pension issue, this one here really bothers me, because I think we can all agree in this place that there is a problem when it comes to people being able to afford to retire. Let me tell you a secret. You might not know this. There are no pensions for MPPs. Unbeknownst to most people, because everybody in my constituency thinks I'm going to get a big MPP pension, there is none. But neither are there pensions for about 80% of the workers in this province. Clearly, something has to be done to try to address that.

What I find a bit galling by this whole process is that Andrea Horwath and New Democrats put out a proposal prior to the last election that looked at providing an Ontario-style pension program that would give workers an opportunity to opt into a defined pension plan under an Ontario pension plan. It wasn't mandatory; it was a plan where you were able to choose and say, "I'd rather be in an RSP plan," or, "I want to be in the OPP plan." And what did the Liberals do when we proposed that? They voted it down.

So here they are in the run-up to their budget and maybe an election, depending on what happens: "Oh, my God, we've got to do something about pensions." Where have you been for 11 years? Why haven't you supported our motions? We've been talking about this issue for years, and you guys, all of a sudden, have woken up and said, "Oh, my God, we've got to do something"? Give me a break.

You know, Liberals are pretty notorious at doing what's right and politically expedient for themselves. You look at what's going on now. For seven years in northern Ontario, people have been saying, "This government has got to get serious about the Ring of Fire." There is an opportunity not only to create mining jobs in the Ring of Fire, there is an opportunity to create a stainless steel industry for all of Ontario, and they have been absolutely nowhere for seven years, except they've put it, I believe, in two throne speeches that they were going to do something, and they certainly have put it in at least three budgets. And what have they done? Oh, my God, just before a budget and—who knows?—maybe an election, we have \$1 billion for the Ring of Fire. Well, where have these guys been for the last seven years?

We've said to you that the secret to the Ring of Fire isn't very complicated. The province, we said as New

Democrats, should put on the table the money necessary to be our one-third share of the development of the infrastructure to the Ring of Fire. Depending on whether it's rail or road, it's anywhere from \$250 million to \$300 million, up to maybe \$600 million or \$700 million. Where the \$1 billion is that the government comes up is a whole other question, but we'll leave that for another debate.

We have said from the beginning that the province should say, "Here's our share"—the \$200 million, \$300 million, \$400 million, whatever it is—"that we're prepared to put into infrastructure quid pro quo; the private sector has got to put in their third and the federal government has to come in and do theirs. In exchange for doing that, we as a provincial government will do revenue-sharing on new mining when it comes to mining in this province for First Nations and other communities so that we can share in the revenue that the province gets and the federal government gets when it comes to mining"—because First Nations have been completely left out. That would bring them to the table. It allows us to deal with a number of other issues, and we'd be very aggressive on the training programs in order to give the people of northern Ontario the ability to train into those jobs so that they can get them, and with an exchange that we put an emphasis on developing a stainless steel industry for Ontario.

But these guys, what do they do? Seven years and not a lot to be said. So we've got Bob Rae, who's got a plan to make a plan. That's what was announced the other day at the smudging ceremony up in Thunder Bay. Where have they been for seven years? It took them seven years to come up with, "I've got a plan to make a plan." My God, where have you guys been?

Then they announce a billion dollars. It's just like they said, "Oh, we have \$2.5 billion for this. We've got \$800 million for this. We've got another billion dollars"—they're throwing money off the side of the boat, as if it's paper money. Well, maybe it is paper money. Maybe these guys have no intention of spending that money, should they have the opportunity. Where are you going to get the backing, the dollars to do this stuff?

I don't say that investments in the Ring of Fire are bad. I don't say investments in developmental services are bad. I'm not talking against any of this. But where have you been for 11 years? All of a sudden it's like we're coming up to a budget and you are trying to cover your bets and you're saying, "We're going to throw in everything we've got, including the kitchen sink," trying to find some way to appease every voter in the province of Ontario. I don't think it's going to work. I think at one point the public says, "Huh? Are they serious? Where have they been?" Anyway, that's the point I wanted to make to that one.

The other thing I just want to say in regard to the issue of the debt and deficit: My colleague from Parkdale-High Park, our opposition whip, raised this in regard to the record of New Democrats when it comes to balancing budgets. The figures are—and I was listening to the

Conservatives. They were laughing and howling and saying, "Oh, my God, what are you guys talking about?" The figures are that 73% of elected Liberal governments have posted deficits since 1980, and 63% of Conservative governments in power have posted deficits since 1980. Only 50% of NDP elected governments have done the same. So the record clearly is that when it comes to power, New Democrats are much better fiscal managers. I will argue, as a member of the NDP government in 1990 to 1995, that we got elected behind a Peterson government that said there was a balanced budget, and it turned out to be a \$9.5-billion deficit the minute we opened the books. And yes, we had a deficit—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It wasn't a \$9.5-billion deficit.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was \$9.5 billion, sir. I was there. I don't know where you were, but I remember looking at the books.

The truth is, the Liberal Peterson government, as the Tories did to the Liberals two elections ago, essentially said to the people of Ontario, "Not only do we have a balanced budget; we have a slight surplus." I think it was \$300 million. We got elected, and I remember going to those first meetings where they said, "Good news and bad news. Hi, everybody. Welcome to the government. Bad news: The government has left us with a \$9.5-billion debt." And we increased that deficit—

Hon. David Zimmer: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. We increased that deficit by \$1 billion in order to do an anti-recession fund for investment and to make sure that workers who were laid off got money when it came to their severances.

The reality is that the Liberals have been the absolute worst. I think the proof is what's happening in this budget right now. It would appear—I don't know; I'll have to see the budget when it comes out—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard an unparliamentary remark. The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Did I?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. You need to stand up and withdraw.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So, as I say, the reality is that New Democrats have a much better record when it comes to balancing the books than both the Liberals and Conservatives put together.

I want to also make one last comment on debt and deficit. I was doing an interview with CFRA, I believe it was, not too long ago and they were asking us about why it is that New Democrats seem these days to be much more fiscally prudent than what they imagined us to be in the past. And I said, "No, it has always been the long position of social democratic parties like ours that in fact you don't spend what you don't got."

I'm going to ask you this question: What is the first thing that Tommy Douglas did when he was elected as a government? It was to balance the budget—very, very

first thing. What was the second thing that he did? I bet most people don't even know this. Most people say, "Oh, it was health care, number one," and when I say, "No, no; it was balancing the budget," they say, "Oh, well, then it must have been the second thing." No. You know what the second thing was? He electrified rural Saskatchewan, because he understood that if farming was going to grow and prosper in Saskatchewan, you needed to have electricity in rural parts of Saskatchewan so they could compete with places around the world, especially those places we were competing with in northern Ontario.

It wasn't until three elections later, and a balanced budget, that Tommy Douglas put forward the issue of having a medical program as we know it today. Yes, he raised some taxes for it, because we understood then, as we do now, that at times you have to have—well, not at times, but you have to have the capacity to pay.

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We're saying as New Democrats today that you have maxed out the middle class. Between what we're having to pay with our hydro bills and what we're having to pay with our gas bills, with the 40% increase that we've seen this fall, with what we're having to see with the overall cost of what it's costing the middle class, there is no room. So we have made a pledge that we will not raise taxes on the middle class, point finale. Why? Because they can least afford it.

To the opposition day motion that my friends from the Conservative Party—I just say this is more of the same. This is a Conservative Party who votes against things before they read them. They make up their mind before they read it. They decide that their view of the world is the only view of the world. They don't believe in compromise whatsoever. Worst of all, they don't accept that the people of Ontario, in the last election, said to all of the parties, "This is a minority Parliament. Go back and make it work." Instead, what do they do? They have motions such as this, which we see as being somewhat silly. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, we will see what will happen in the upcoming vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: There's an abiding memory I have, and that is of my grandfather driving once a month to the pension office to collect his pension. During the summer holidays or the winter holidays, when we were at home, sometimes we would get a chance to go with him, and we looked forward to that because it was a ritual. He would go to the pension office, collect his paycheck and then go to his club to get his monthly haircut. If we went with him while he was getting his haircut, we could also go to the club. I remember the big thing for us was having pop and cheese sandwiches, which were a big treat if you're growing up in India, because cheese is not a common Indian thing. When I've been hearing about these pension debates, that's the memory I always have, of my grandfather going every month.

As he grew older, my mom and his sons would tell him, "You don't have to go to the pension office to

collect your cheque. It can be directly deposited into your bank." But he insisted on going. He would say, "I need to go there to collect my cheque." It was a point of pride for him that he was still financially independent, that he was still getting a paycheck. He, of course, liked to go to the pension office and chat with his friends.

I have this very clear memory of him driving to the pension office, walking up the steps, going to that little service window, getting his cheque. He did that right to the end. A few weeks before he died, he had gone to the pension office to pick up his last cheque. At his funeral, the entire pension office showed up, because he had been their longest customer who actually came physically to pick up his cheque.

I only tell this personal story to talk about how important, in those golden years, having a good pension can be. It is a little disappointing for me, quite frankly, to see the opposition here not standing up for Ontarians.

Quite properly, this ought to be a federal issue. This ought to be something that the Prime Minister of Canada should be championing. It is particularly disturbing because this Prime Minister and his Conservative MPs will have their own pensions. I will give credit to him that they have trimmed the gold-plated MP pensions, downscaled them. Still, the fact is, a Conservative MP can serve just six years and then look forward to a very decent pension from age 65 on, and I don't begrudge them that. What I don't understand is, if you have a good pension, why can't you stand up for your constituents, why can't you stand up for the average Ontarian and say, "Just as I have a pension, these folks deserve a pension"? It is, indeed, very, very disappointing.

My constituents don't care whether it's a provincial issue or a federal issue; they just want things done. I am really pleased and really proud to be part of a Liberal team that's willing to do what someone else ought to be doing. If they're not doing it, we are going to do this. There is a famous saying: Lead or get out of the way. I'm going to say to my Tory friends, members of Parliament and members of provincial Parliament, if you don't want to lead on the pension issue, get out of the way so we can show the leadership that we are trying to show. How can you not show leadership on this issue? You should be, at this point, petitioning your federal members of Parliament. You should be saying to them, "Listen, Ontarians need this. Canadians need this." Study after study has shown that CPP isn't enough. Study after study has shown that Ontarians are not saving enough. We need a solution; we need to show leadership. We can't just turn a blind eye; we cannot be ideological.

The other thing that I can't understand is, if you think the government has no role in providing people pensions, that people ought to be saving on their own, fine. Then, as a student of economics, I can tell you, if you want to incent people to save, what you do is you cut income tax but you raise expenditure taxes and you raise consumption taxes. Why on earth would you cut the GST? It makes no sense. If you want to incent people to save, it makes no sense for the federal members of Parliament

and for Mr. Harper to have cut the GST. So I don't understand. You don't want to lead on pensions, you don't want to help Ontarians save, and you will not even follow a tax policy that would let Ontarians save. At least if you could be consistent in your ideology, that would be helpful.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Consistently wrong.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you so much to the member from Vaughan.

The other thing that I just want to say is that I get calls all the time from seniors in my riding who talk about the fact that their CPP just isn't enough. I'm sure you get those calls as well. I believe I'm a realist. Let's solve the problem at hand. Let's see what we can do. Why can't we all work together?

This opposition day motion is nothing but—it's just cheap politics. But here's the thing: It's not even going to get you the politics, because I speak to people in my riding, and regardless of their partisanship they all agree—everybody in Ontario agrees—that people ought to be able to retire with a decent pension. I don't think there is an argument around that. So the only issue now is how we go about doing it.

Study after study shows that Ontarians are not saving enough. Since the federal government will not show the leadership they ought to be showing, what we have come up is very simple: a made-in-Ontario solution. Guess what? There are a lot of provinces that actually support us on this. There are a lot of provinces who are now looking at Ontario for leadership because the federal government has failed to provide leadership.

So what we've done is we have struck an expert committee, and this panel is going to look at the best way that we can enhance pensions for Ontarians. I would ask the opposition not to jump the gun. You haven't even heard the details; you have no idea what the plan is. So instead of shooting down an imaginary plan, why not work with us? Why not work with us to help Ontarians have a pension?

I couldn't agree more with what the third party said, which is that the Conservatives have consistently shown that they will shoot down anything and everything. You've become the party of no. You don't stand for anything that says yes, other than the right to work. All you stand for is, "I'm against this, I'm against this and I'm against this." It's about time you started to say that you are for Ontarians, that you are here for Ontarians. It's about time that you started to stand up and say that Ontarians deserve a good pension, and applaud and take pride in the fact, as an Ontarian—take off your partisan hat—that here in Canada we, the province of Ontario—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: We're sick of you. When are you going to get it through your head? We're sick of you. What part don't you understand?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

Hon. David Zimmer: Don't be rude.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Rude? Coming from you?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Simcoe North, come to order. The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville has the floor.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to end by saying that I am really, really proud to be part of a team that is looking at a made-in-Ontario solution. I'm really, really proud of a Premier who—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Simcoe North to withdraw his unparliamentarily comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm not sure I did anything, but I withdraw, okay? But I'm going to continue heckling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pardon?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's the way to do it. Thank you.

Sorry, the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville has the floor.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker.

I apologize that I got you so agitated, but I'm just stating the facts.

I'm just going to end by saying that I heard the third party say they will not be supporting this Conservative opposition day motion, and I look forward to voting against it and defeating it and standing up for my constituents.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to speak to this motion this afternoon. I think people should look carefully at the wording of this motion because I believe it has, within it, a warning—a warning to all of us about the kind of strain that we are seeing obviously on all issues around taxation and revenue tools, but particularly today's discussion centres around the issue of payroll deductions and paycheque deductions. I think it's really important to focus on those because of the fact that they have a direct impact on both employees and employers.

When you look at the kinds of deductions that people face as employers, it seems to be the idea of government and agencies that there is just a well there that you can continue to draw from without regard for the kind of impact that those payroll deductions have. This motion allows us to have an opportunity to delve a little deeper into just how dangerous these are and, as well, for people who look at their paycheques and see what is at the top of the page and then what is the net take-home and the kinds of deductions that are represented there.

What we are looking at, for instance—just to put a few figures on this—is that, today, a person who earns \$34,000 may pay just under \$10,000 in deductions. When you look at that kind of bite out of someone's take-home pay, the notion that there's more room to make more deductions on the payroll just simply does not hold up to any standard of scrutiny because when you take away

that ability of the individual, you're actually taking away his ability to choose. He has less and less money in which to make a choice of how he's going to spend it and he's going to, most likely, spend it in a responsible way. He's going to make sure that the bills are paid—he might have trouble when he gets the hydro bill—but he's going to make sure that he can pay for his mortgage, his rent or things like that. So whenever there is a pressure on that take-home pay, that reduces not only his ability to pay in real terms but it also eats at that ability to make choices and to be responsible when you watch your money disappear.

It's really, I think, an issue that we should look at from that micro issue as well. What is this doing to employers and employees? Employers look at these deductions and they start to see the point at which they're earning less than their employees, in many cases, quite frankly. They're also looking at how they can adjust their business to stay in business, but maybe it means having to let someone go; maybe it means fewer hours. The point is that they, like the employee, are looking at fewer choices that they can make, fewer responsibilities that they have to the vitality and the viability of their business, just like the employee has to look at the viability of his own family life.

When we look at any potential possibility of adding to payroll deductions, we also, as taxpayers, need to look further at the fact that there are 1.3 million people who work in the public sector, so any kind of payroll adjustment decline is going to mean that it's coming out of the pocket of the taxpayer. He gets to pay for himself in his payroll deduction; he also gets to pay for those 1.3 million people.

I think that people, when they are making decisions about payroll deductions or paycheque deductions, need to look at it from that aspect. This is not a bottomless pit. It is not a well that just goes on forever. The companies that are having difficulty keeping their doors open, the families that are having difficulty meeting their responsibilities—these are the people we should keep in mind when we talk about this motion.

The problem is that the government has mused about adding payroll taxes. It's very important to look at what others say about that. We certainly have lots of evidence to suggest that this is a very dangerous precedent to begin. The CFIB has looked at the impact of any kind of payroll taxes and recognized that it's a job-killer. It means that people have to make those hard decisions. And so when you look at the expert advice and many others who have identified this kind of problem, they have also been able, through the Ministry of Finance, to look at their analysis, and their analysis shows that for every \$2 billion—I have it written down; \$2 billion is equal to several thousand jobs. Potentially, 150,000 jobs are at stake.

That's the kind of thing that on the macro level should make an impact on people who might skate over the problem of the individual or the individual business. But when you look at it as a macro issue, it's frightening to

think that so much could be at risk when we, in fact, are waking up every morning with 600,000 people and more unemployed and then to potentially, at will, take steps that would mean a further 150,000 people who would then be out of work.

Any kind of payroll tax is a job-killer, and obviously a new payroll tax would be a detriment to Ontario's economy. It's really a concern when you look at the fact that so much investment is fluid today. People can take their money out of the province or they can bring it in. When you consider that there's that fluidity with investment, it also means that we live in a very competitive world for job creation, and so it's most important that the government live within its means. What we're looking at today is the opposite.

The purpose of this motion is to provide a warning and it's also to recognize that you need to have a plan. Tim Hudak has provided that plan. We recognize the value of a job, and that is the centerpiece for our plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to join in this debate. You know, there's been a lot of talk this afternoon, but the reality that we're really talking about is that under the existing CPP, Canada Pension Plan, it provides about \$12,000 a year. That's not enough money for anybody to live on if that's their only source of income. If you are a wealthy person and you're picking up another \$12,000 a year, you wouldn't even realize if you got it or if you didn't get it. But for those people who have spent a lifetime on minimum wage or low-paying jobs and who do not have a pension and find themselves having to survive after 65 or so on \$12,000 a year, that is very, very difficult.

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I know that the member opposite from Simcoe North probably won't agree with me on this, but I rather expect—I know that the College of Trades is a big buzz under his bonnet. It's people who are members of the College of Trades, like hairdressers, who probably don't have pensions, who will really appreciate the \$12,000 a year plus the enhancement that we want the federal government to sit down and do.

Now, what's the federal government's position on this? One way to address the shortfall to enhance the pension is to get the federal government to sit down with the provinces and with others and come up with a formula to increase that \$12,000 to a more realistic figure that's required in this modern day and age to live. But what has the federal government's position been? Well, the federal government's position at one time was that they seemed to be interested in it. Lately, the federal government, notwithstanding that a number of the provinces are very interested in working out some plan to enhance the CPP, has moved away from its initial support. Initially, back in 2010, they seemed to be in favour of CPP enhancement, but now they're citing a lack of consensus among provinces. Instead, it is promoting its own version of a program which is known as PRPP.

Hon. Jeff Leal: What does that stand for?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm not quite sure what that stands for, but it's a savings program where they are putting the onus on the worker who wants to retire at 65 to have saved up enough money to supplement his own pension. But the problem is, how does someone on minimum wage save that extra money if they have a wife and a child and they are in a minimum wage job and they're suffering periods of layoffs and so on? They do not have the luxury of setting aside a chunk of money every month.

Now, those people who are on minimum wage and are depending on the CPP are entitled to be treated respectfully. One way that you treat them respectfully is that you provide them with a decent pension. Twelve thousand dollars a year is not a decent pension. Nobody can live on \$12,000 a year. Most of the people that are depending on that CPP pension are probably renting their living space, an apartment or something. Where in Toronto do you get a place for under \$1,000 a month? Where in some of the small towns of Ontario do you get a place for less than \$600 or \$700 a month? By the time you pay your rent, if you are in Toronto, you don't have anything left over. If you are living in other parts of the province, you've probably got a bit left over. But I do not understand why anybody of good conscience would not want to see people have a reasonable income with which to retire.

Now, the federal government says, "We can't move ahead with the enhancement program on the CPP because we can't find a consensus among the provinces." Well, the fact is that Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island support a CPP enhancement. Who is opposed? Well, you get wealthy provinces like Alberta, apparently, and some of the other provinces. Quebec is proceeding, I understand, with its own plan to enhance the program.

So what should we do here as responsible legislators? As responsible legislators, in the absence of federal leadership on this issue—and it's not surprising that there isn't federal leadership on this issue, because there's a whole host of issues that affect Ontario where there's a complete absence of federal leadership or participation where there should be.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Like what?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm asked for an example. Let's look at the Ring of Fire, because that's topical this month.

The Ring of Fire would help First Nations people. It would help the Ontario economy. It would help the Canadian economy. It would help everybody in Canada, and they are not at the table. They are not participating.

We want to sit down with the federal government and work out a plan to enhance the Canada Pension Plan. Where are they? "Well, we're not prepared to sit down on it. We don't want to do anything on it. We'll leave you on your own. We're not going to do anything." So the province and this Legislature, as responsible legislators, are prepared to step in and do something about enhancing pension plans for the people who most need them.

In fact, in Ontario, we absolutely recognize that Ontarians have a right to retire with security; it's a clear right, if you will. The federal government? That's not their view. They have unilaterally blocked any enhancement.

What is the result of that? Well, the result of that is, in fact, the federal government is abandoning seniors. They're abandoning the seniors who most depend on that modest pension, those for whom a modest and reasonable increase in the pension from \$12,000 to a higher sum would make a dramatic change in their life. It would take the emotional pressure off of them of how they're going to make ends meet and so on. The fact of the matter is, \$12,000 is just not enough to survive on.

Ontario is prepared to step in, and we will make, if necessary, a made-in-Ontario system. In fact, we've taken some steps in that regard. We've asked former Prime Minister Paul Martin—who was a Minister of Finance, who balanced budgets, who understands government finances, who understands how to manage government finances—to head up the panel.

The panel is made up of other pension experts. I can tell you their names: Bill Morneau, Keith Ambachtsheer, David Denison, Susan Eng, Melissa Kennedy and Jim Keohane. They're going to take a look at this whole issue of how we can have a viable pension plan and what we can do to enhance the CPP or come up with our own pension plan so that people can have the retirement they are entitled to. The panel will advise government on steps to be taken and the best way to achieve what we want to achieve, and that is a secure, reasonable, honourable and respectful retirement for our most vulnerable.

The leader of the official opposition: What's his view of this? He thinks that Ontario should not take leadership in anything. That's not surprising, because he's the same leader who, last year, was not prepared to even read the budget and who this year, apparently, is telling us he's not prepared to read the budget when it comes out, nor is he prepared to support it.

But our government knows that Ontarians expect leadership on this issue of retirement security and pension reform. They expect it, and they need it. We are prepared to step into the gap, the void, created by the federal government and develop a pension plan that is viable, that is fair and that is reasonable.

I say in closing, I daresay there are a whole lot of hairdressers at the College of Trades who are going to be very, very happy with pension enhancement.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to stand here and support my colleague from Nipissing on this very important motion. I feel that it demonstrates how the PC Party of Ontario is actually listening, actually getting it and actually taking action that reflects the will of the population in Ontario.

It's very interesting: Let's talk about and reflect a little bit on a tax on jobs. Essentially, payroll taxes are a type of tax based on workers' hours, wages or salaries. Governments collect payroll taxes in two ways: from workers

through deductions on their paycheques and from employers based on the amount of work their employees do.

1730

Payroll taxes are often called a tax on jobs because they are a government-imposed cost on hiring. That's key here.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's the Liberal way—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: As my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon said, it's the Liberal way.

It's important to note that Ontario has the highest payroll taxes in Canada. On average, as we heard earlier, families pay \$9,970 a year in government payroll taxes, in addition to their personal income taxes. Quite frankly, Ontario cannot afford another Liberal scheme.

We have to talk about this a little more. We received documentation from the Ministries of Finance, Infrastructure and Transportation. This piece of documentation cites that any increase in taxes would have negative, long-run, macroeconomic impacts on the GDP and employment. Specifically, it goes on to say, "Payroll taxes would have the 'largest negative impact' on employment."

Madam Speaker, I'm afraid that what we're witnessing here is more of the same from a tired, old Liberal government that's out of gas. They have no other means to correct the mistakes they have made, except for digging into taxpayers' pockets. It has to stop.

Again, in this particular documentation that some of the members across the way from me might be familiar with, it goes on to say that a payroll tax lowers "business investment, relocation of business to other jurisdictions, reduced work effort and out-migration of people."

In my experience as critic of small business and red tape, and speaking to people around this province, that exact negative impact is starting to happen, and yet this Liberal government is turning a blind eye.

Before I get into those specific examples, I want to use my time by sharing some news, as well, that reflects on this negative tax.

On January 28, 2014, the Canadian Press posted a couple of quotes from Premier Wynne. It's interesting. Premier Wynne is quoted as saying, "The minority Liberal government is worried people are not saving enough for retirement." Well, I ask the party opposite, why are they not able to save for their retirement? It's because, time after time, this government is exposing taxpayers to the cost of their scandals, expecting them to just stand by and let that Liberal government dip their hands into their pockets more and more.

One of the recommendations that this motion implies is that the government needs to stop taxing the Ontario taxpayer for their mistakes. We have so many scandals that are wasting good, hard-earned taxpayer dollars. We have the green energy scheme. We have the billion-dollar scandal where we saw \$1.1 billion spent and wasted to save a couple of seats so that the Liberal government could form a minority government in 2011.

There was another news article posted on Monday, April 28, and it was quite interesting. This is from the

Star. There's a particular quote that reads, "It's not the government that's going to do it"—in terms of managing this OPP, which is a knee-jerk reaction in terms of titling. Recently, we've heard that it has been renamed the ORPP. This particular article posted yesterday, Monday, says the government is not going to do it; it's going to be an arm's-length organization that's going to manage, facilitate this ORPP. Well, Madam Speaker, and to everyone watching today, I say, no, thank you; we've had enough.

Let's think about Ornge for a second. How well has that worked? Let's think about eHealth. Ontario taxpayers cannot afford another Liberal arm's-length organization squandering hard-earned dollars.

This province is just a mess. I want to talk now about the end result of this mess that this Liberal government is creating.

There was a big focus on Windsor over the last couple of days. When I visited Windsor, I met with a small business owner who actually showed me his bills, and his electricity rates are higher than the rent he pays. How on earth is he going to afford another jobs tax? This ORPP is just not going to be palatable. People are out of money, and they are going to be looking for an out because, quite frankly, they're tired of paying for Liberal mistakes.

I want to talk about attending a meeting for Merit Ontario as well. I had the pleasure of meeting an industrious couple who are very, very worried about their future in Ontario. In fact, it's getting so bad, they're saying it won't take much more—like another tax, like ORPP—for them to close the doors of their Ontario business and relocate to Alberta, where they have a second business going, because they're fed up.

Then let's talk about the small manufacturer in Huron county that I met with a couple of weeks ago. They say that the only specialty and expertise that has been witnessed in this decade of despair from this Liberal government is the ability to fill file cabinets. What does she mean? She's talking about the burden of red tape and the unnecessary taxing and the unnecessary paperwork. This particular owner, it's sad to say, said that they are not encouraging their children to succeed then. Usually, if you put your whole heart and soul into growing a business, it would be a desire to have family members carry on the tradition that you strove so hard to establish. Sadly enough, their conclusion is, there is no future in small business in their particular manufacturing reality because of all the taxing and all the red tape and burden. So as I said, this particular Huron county manufacturer is recommending that their kids not go into their business. How sad is that?

Another thing we need to talk about is that the reality is that they talk about a pension plan, but for the retirees who are struggling to make ends meet, this particular tax will do nothing for them. Time and again, be it in my Blyth constituency office or my Kincardine constituency office, I have seniors coming in. This one couple in particular—they showed me their paperwork. Their electricity is more than what they're bringing in in old age security.

So I would say to this Liberal government: Get your act together. Stop the scandal. Start listening. You have the ability to right a number of wrongs. The Green Energy Act in particular is a piece of work that has done nothing but increase the cost of living in Ontario. When I think about those seniors who are seeing their bills go up as of May 1, because OEB is recognizing renewables over the next 12 months—that's causing it to happen—I say, shame on this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I always enjoy starting off my remarks in this Legislature by talking about how I feel honoured to have the chance to stand and speak. I do again today on this particular motion, opposition day motion number 4. I've also had the benefit of having now been in my seat over the last little while and had the chance to listen to members from all three caucuses provide their comments. It's interesting—

Hon. Jeff Leal: This speech is going to be so good, I want to sit beside him.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's always good to have the very close support of the Minister of Rural Affairs and the member from Peterborough.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Good to be with you today.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: He's doing a phenomenal job representing the people of his riding and doing a phenomenal job as the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's quite amazing, because as I sat here and listened over the last little while to the comments made from virtually every person who spoke on this from both opposition caucuses, I wasn't quite sure where to begin with my comments, because there is so much that I heard over the last while that, in all truthfulness, has almost nothing to do with the motion that is before us, including the comments made just most recently by the member from Huron-Bruce, who ended up talking about things, from the Green Energy Act to a whole host of other matters, that don't actually get to the heart of what we are here to talk about this afternoon.

Interjection.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's clear that I've struck a nerve with that member, because of the comments that are coming back from the other side at this particular point.

What we are here to talk about with respect to this motion is how important, how crucial it is, because Ontario is at a very important juncture with respect to making sure that, as Ontarians age and as they leave the workforce because it is time to retire, this province does what it can to make sure that they have a secure retirement.

1740

We have heard everyone—certainly members of the NDP caucus who have spoken and members on this side—acknowledge that, while the CPP is a fairly foundational, fundamental social program here in the province of Ontario and in our country, after many, many

years of providing significant support to Canadians and to Ontarians, it's no longer sufficient.

That's why, over the last number of months, Ontario's Premier, Kathleen Wynne, has time and again demonstrated significant, strong leadership on this file, along with Ontario's Minister of Finance—the Minister of Finance I have an opportunity to work with closely as I serve as his parliamentary assistant.

The Premier and the Minister of Finance have demonstrated pan-Canadian leadership on this file. They have recognized that there is a looming crisis with respect to retirement security for the people of our province, and so they didn't actually just begin a conversation out of nowhere with respect to the importance of providing additional retirement security. They actually began the discussion and the dialogue with other provincial Premiers and counterpart finance ministers, and sought to engage the federal government in a meaningful discussion around this very important issue.

As has been said by members on this side of the House and has been said by the Premier and the Minister of Finance and many members of the governing caucus, there was actual consensus that was forged amongst the various provinces that had an interest in moving this agenda forward—not necessarily flicking a magical switch on a Monday and saying on Tuesday that everything will be ready and set to go, but seeking a federal partner that would at least be willing to sit down and have a conversation so that all of us, provincial representatives in the various Legislatures across the country and federal members of the House of Commons, could look into the eyes of people who would seek to retire in the future and would say that we did our bit, that we worked together, that we rolled up our sleeves and we came up with a plan that would make sense for every single Canadian, including for those living, of course, here in our wonderful province of Ontario.

After months of very hard work, determination and energy, and after forging that consensus that I referenced just a second ago, the Premier of Ontario and her counterparts reached out to the federal government and said, "Sit down with us; work with us. Let's be constructive about this; let's push partisanship to the side. It doesn't matter what part of this country you come from; everybody deserves the opportunity to have significant security and sustainable security in their retirement."

They sought to have a federal partner begin and engage in that kind of meaningful dialogue. And what happened, Madam Speaker? As the Premier of Ontario, Premier Kathleen Wynne, made that attempt alongside her fellow Premiers, Canada's Conservative federal government said, "We don't even want to engage in a conversation. We don't even want to entertain the discussion that perhaps Premier Kathleen Wynne and the rest of her provincial counterparts have come up with a plan that makes sense in terms of enhancing the retirement security of Canadians from coast to coast to coast and, of course, for Ontarians."

So what did the Premier then do, Madam Speaker? She decided that it was important to demonstrate, yet

again, what leadership is. And what leadership is, in this case, is working hard to develop and eventually to deploy a made-in-Ontario retirement or pension security plan.

As we've heard over the last number of days, if not weeks, that is in fact the course that Ontario will be embarking on and, of course, Minister Sousa, this coming Thursday, May 1, will present his budget in this Legislature. It's important to make sure we note: In this Legislature the budget will be presented, not elsewhere; not at Magna, not in Brampton, not elsewhere, but in this Legislature. In that budget, I think every Ontarian looks forward to seeing the details of the plan that, over time and in the future, will provide that significant support.

So here we are today, and we have this motion and, of course, the debate that surrounds the motion, particularly from the official opposition and also from members of the third party—hopefully, I'll have enough time to respond to some of the comments that we've heard from members of the third party in the course of debate this afternoon.

Specifically, it saddens me to think that members of the official opposition are yet again determined to be nothing but destructive and reckless with such an important issue, very similar to their federal counterparts, the counterparts the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville referenced they should be reaching out to, they should be petitioning and they should be lobbying. Instead of doing that meaningful work on behalf of Ontarians who will seek to retire and want that security, they've done nothing but come up with their own reckless proposals and ideas, and we see the manifestation of that recklessness in today's motion brought forward by the member from Nipissing.

I had the chance to listen very closely to both the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in his remarks today, the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville and the others from this side of the House—the member from Mississauga–Streetsville—who spoke very eloquently on our side about the importance of moving forward with a constructive dialogue. I think it's really important to remember that when the official opposition had the opportunity to work with us—and this is a pattern that we've seen emerge over the last couple of years: that without even giving a thought to working with the government or working with the members of the third party, the NDP, they seek to lash out, to move forward, again, in that very reckless way and not demonstrate the kind of leadership.

They talked a lot, in the course of the debate this afternoon, about the importance of jobs. Of course, we on this side of the House don't disagree at all about the importance of creating good-paying jobs. That's why, just earlier this week, the Premier spoke to the Empire Club and unveiled or talked about the details, announced the details, of the government's significant plans around job creation for the next 10 years.

As I sat in the audience and listened to the Premier speak at the Empire Club just the other day, it actually brought to mind the opportunity that I had just last week,

where myself and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Michael Coteau, spent some time at a company in my riding called Vision Extrusions. We were there to make an announcement in conjunction with the announcement that the Minister of Energy was making simultaneously in Ottawa about some of the measures, some of the reforms that are transformational in nature, that our government has brought forward to help companies like Vision Extrusions and hundreds of others in similar positions across this province that continue to thrive. I want to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for being there that day to make that specific announcement in my riding.

What that announcement will mean is that this particular company, Vision Extrusions, will be better positioned to expand their operations, hire hundreds more Ontarians, and position themselves to compete not just with other companies in Ontario, not just with other companies across Canada, but right across North America. In fact, that is a company that has over 70% of its current production sold in the United States. They are based in my riding. I'm very proud of that fact. But as we walked around the factory, a spotless factory that Mr. Vic De Zen created with his own creativity, with his own energy, with his own enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit, as we had the chance to walk around and take that tour of that particular factory, what was interesting was to see and meet the individuals who work in that factory. It's like a big family, actually, in that particular factory: hundreds of people, women and men, many of whom have worked for Mr. De Zen for quite some time. And they're thrilled to work for him. He's a great employer. But as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and I looked at those people and had the chance to speak with them and interact with them, what became clear to us was that not only did they want that job that pays them well today; they want to know that, in the future, they and their children will have the opportunity to retire in dignity and to have the kind of security that they need.

By engaging in this discussion now, by demonstrating exactly what leadership is, the Premier of Ontario is providing those people with hope. She's providing them with a real, concrete plan for how to make sure that the kind of retirement security that's needed in this province is actually delivered. There is only one leader in this Legislature and in this province who has demonstrated consistently, over the last number of months, that she has a real plan—and not just a plan, because I heard the member from Timmins–James Bay, in his remarks this afternoon, talk about all the great things the NDP have come up with over the last 10 years and how we haven't done anything for the last 10 years, apparently, on this side of the House. There is only one leader in this Legislature who not only has the plan, but has the determination—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Vision.

Mr. Steven Del Duca:—the energy and the vision to move forward with that plan, and the strength of vision to

move forward with that plan, and that is Ontario's Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne. I'm telling you, when I think of the tens of thousands of people that I'm proud to represent from my community of Vaughan, and I look at them and I say, "In the future, because of the decisions we make in this House, because of the leadership demonstrated by Premier Kathleen Wynne, you will have the retirement security that you need," it makes me proud to be an Ontario Liberal and be an MPP and serve in this Legislature.

I encourage every member in this House to vote against this motion and to join with us to bring meaningful retirement security to the people of this province. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has expired.

Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members take their seats, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Vic

Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 44.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is a late show. As we settle, we'll continue with the late show once we're done.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd.

An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Huron-Bruce has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on April 16 by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Please begin.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to have a second opportunity to revisit a very important subject, not only to the residents in my riding of Huron-Bruce, but across Ontario, because the underlying issue impacts all of us.

As this green spiral continues out of control, every person in Ontario is witnessing and experiencing some-

thing that has never been experienced before in Ontario, and that is an outrageous gouging in terms of electricity prices, which just recently the Ontario Energy Board has indicated is the cause of a rate hike that we're going to experience on May 1—and that cause is the onslaught of renewables that will be coming online over the next 12 months.

In that spirit, Speaker, I asked the Minister of Energy on April 16 why he would not impose an immediate moratorium.

All the while, we're experiencing jurisdictions that are benefiting from our surplus energy. We're experiencing proponents of renewables that are benefiting, at the taxpayers' expense, for not generating a source of electricity, in terms of turbines being curtailed. We're experiencing a lot of strife.

Families are moving out of Ontario. Just this past week—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They are so. Esther Wrightman and her family are relocating.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: You'd better tune in to what is really going on in Ontario. There are residents moving out because of your failed green energy scheme. Esther Wrightman and her—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm going to interrupt. I want to be able to hear the speaker. I do not want to have it drowned out.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I really appreciate that, because this is very serious.

Families are relocating and being driven away from their home communities because of the mismanagement of the energy file.

To that end, it is not acceptable for the Minister of Energy to evade questions when such large amounts of taxpayer dollars are at stake. The minister has a responsibility to be accountable and to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the public. Evading questions and sitting on hands is not the answer. That's what we see, Madam Speaker, unfortunately, from both the Liberals and the NDP. Valuable members, as I've mentioned, of local communities have just notified me that they're selling their homes and their businesses, and moving to another province because they don't see a future for their family here in Ontario.

1810

Interestingly enough, when the OEB announced their rate hike as of Thursday, Brady Yauch, an economist and executive director of the Consumer Policy Institute, reported that, according to the OEB, "the cost of electricity from renewable energy producers will be \$3.4 billion over the next 12 months, while the value of that power on the open electricity market is \$400 million."

Speaker, while we have the province turning upside down and irate over the scandalous \$1.1 billion wasted on gas plant cancellations, people should be equally

dismayed and concerned over this scandal and this mismanagement of hard-earned dollars. Again, I want to repeat: "The cost of electricity from renewable energy producers will be \$3.4 billion over the next 12 months, while the value of that power on the open electricity market is \$400 million."

I encourage people to stand up and say to this Liberal government, "Enough. Change is needed."

The OPA has under contract 8,170 megawatts of renewable, non-hydroelectric generation, and the latest request for a qualification directive to the OPA is to run two more procurements.

Madam Speaker, I come back to my original question: Why on earth is this Liberal government continuing on a course that is not only going to bankrupt this province but is going to bankrupt the ordinary citizens who are striving so hard to make ends meet? It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever. Enough is enough.

Parker Gallant estimates that if the contracts are implemented, renewable energy developers will be paid approximately \$100 billion over the 20-year term of the contracts.

When other jurisdictions around this world are finding ways to correct their mistakes as they experienced with renewables, I encourage this Liberal government in what seemingly might be some of their few weeks, few months in office, to do the right thing and place an immediate moratorium on any more renewables.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has the floor.

Mr. Bob Delaney: First of all, I thank the member for Huron—Bruce for her questions and certainly for the concerns she raised.

She raised the matter of the impact of renewable energy in the area that she represents, and I get that. One of the things that's worth mentioning, however, is that in the member's riding is the Bruce nuclear power development, something of which, as Ontarians, we're all very, very proud.

One of the challenges facing us as Ontarians in the next 20 years is going to be taking our world-class fleet of nuclear reactors, of which there are eight at Bruce and four at Darlington and currently eight at Pickering—the Pickering reactors represent a 1950s design and a 1960s construction, and there is in practical terms no realistic way as those reactors reach the end of their useful life. By useful life, I mean that no matter how well maintained a piece of machinery is, there's a point at which the piece of machinery is simply worn out. So those eight reactors will need to be replaced with other sources of generation, possibly with new reactors as time goes on. All eight of the Bruce reactors will need to come out of service, one at a time, for refurbishment and all four of the Darlington reactors will need to come out of service one at a time for refurbishment, a process that will begin shortly and actually take somewhere in excess of 20 years to complete.

The question then is, why is Ontario still procuring electricity from renewable sources? Part of the reason is that the alternative might be to generate it from coal, and

now Ontario is the first jurisdiction in North America to be completely, absolutely free of coal. We no longer generate electricity by burning coal. That's meant, particularly for those of us in urban areas, substantially cleaner air.

So while the member has raised questions about wind turbines in her area, let me tell you about some of the impact of wind turbines and other forms of renewable energy, which would include water power, solar photovoltaics, landfill gas, biogas, but for all practical purposes, water power, solar photovoltaics, or solar PV, and wind turbines. It has meant that in an urban area, such as where I come from in Mississauga, where 10 or 12 years ago we would have a dozen or two dozen smog alert days and heavy air days in the course of a summer, last summer we had two. The previous summer, we had one. The summer before that, we had none.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Cleaner air.

Mr. Bob Delaney: We have cleaner air. Part of the return for the Ontario taxpayer on renewable energy is cleaner air. It has also meant that in our schools our kids are not showing up with puffers. It means kids can breathe. There are some very short-term health impacts in moving to renewable energy.

In the long-term energy plan, which I know the member has read—and she should have internalized a bit

more of it, which is something I'm sure she will as time goes on. As she grasps the impact of the long-term energy plan, she'll know that, in listening to some of the concerns she and her colleagues have raised, in changing the way renewable energy is procured, now wind power is what's called "dispatchable." This means that when wind power and solar PV power is not needed, it can be unplugged from the grid. I think she gets this point.

The feed-in tariff, for people who don't know, allows homeowners, business owners and private developers to generate electricity from renewable energy and to sell it to the Ontario grid at a contracted price for a fixed term; in other words, in many ways, treating that supply contract just like a mortgage.

Hon. John Gerretsen: They put up the capital cost.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As my colleague from Kingston says, in this case, instead of the taxpayer putting up the capital cost, the developer puts up the capital cost. This would apply to wind, which the member has mentioned, to water power, to biogas, to landfill gas and to solar photovoltaics—that's all the time I have, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1817.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Emie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Brampton–Springdale	

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Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
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Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
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**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
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Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
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Jonah Schein
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Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
John O'Toole, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
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**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna
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Bill Walker
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Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 30 April 2014

Mercredi 30 avril 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 24, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 51, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated, we were into questions and comments from the Minister of Rural Affairs. He's not here, so we move to the next rotation.

Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to stand this morning as our party's critic for community safety and correctional services to speak on Bill 51, the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

When I read the words "security" and "electricity generating facilities" in the title, I did a quick read through the bill to see if the security involved was the protection of emails or other documents related to the gas-fired generating plants. I'm sorry to report that that's not the kind of security that we're talking about in this bill. Before anyone over there—I know the Chair of Cabinet is very quick with standing order changes—I'm going to try to stick to the bill.

The previous incarnation of this bill in 2012 was known as Bill 34 at the time. It actually made it through second reading. In fact, the bill went through committee,

it was amended and ultimately it was brought back to this House for third reading. Just a few hours of debate remained and the bill could have been on the books as passed legislation from the previous Parliament. But you'll recall, Speaker, something actually happened that interrupted Bill 34's rather smooth sailing through the Legislature. In fact, what happened derailed not just this bill, but many other pieces of very good legislation. That, of course, was Dalton McGuinty, the previous Premier, proroguing Parliament, and a lot of those bills that would have been passed and that had all-party support died on the order paper.

Let's face it: He pulled the plug because of the heat he was facing from the politically motivated decision to flush more than \$1 billion down the drain by cancelling the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants. Bill 34, again, was a victim of the former Premier's decision to get out of Dodge, to leave this place. Unfortunately, we had just a few hours of debate left and the bill would have passed.

So we're back here, back in office. Bill 51 was introduced on April 10. I have to tell you that I was amazed that my friend, Mr. Yakabuski, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—my predecessor in this critic portfolio—stood in his place and gave an hour leadoff one year ago this week. It was one year ago that our party gave the opening hour leadoff on this bill. A full year has now passed before the government got around to calling this bill again.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: No, Minister, it's a full year before your government made this bill a priority and brought it back to the floor of the Legislature. His speech, back on April 24 of last year—I note that it had been 14 months since he joined the debate on Bill 34. So here we are today, a full year later. I know the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton is here, and he'll be doing his barnburner one-hour leadoff for the NDP.

I want to also say that my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke asked a year ago, when he spoke on the bill, what the government had been doing all this time. We're going to find out tomorrow how badly this Ontario government has managed our economy, when the finance minister reveals the details about his plans to keep spending and put us further and further in debt.

I think the little history lesson I just provided on Bills 34 and 51 speaks to the inability of this government to manage the minority. I think we've seen this, time and time again. Whether it was under Premier McGuinty or, now, Premier Wynne, this government has significant difficulty managing the minority. How on earth can you

presume you can run a province when you can't seem to get a bill that has all-party support through second reading in 12 months? It's unbelievable to me.

Basically, we've got a lot of fanfare and now Bill 51 is back on the order paper today, Speaker—and welcome, Speaker; it's good to see you in the chair.

There's no plan by this government to manage the Legislature, and certainly there's no plan to get our province turned around. The people deserve better. I know that the people of Leeds–Grenville certainly want the government to stand up and put forward some legislation that is going to get us back on track. I know that our party has a bill, the Million Jobs Act, that is guaranteed to get our economy back and going.

It's important to remember, with Bill 51, that it's not only the “what” that is important but the “why.” This particular bill repeals the Public Works Protection Act, an outdated piece of legislation from the 1930s that suddenly found itself in the spotlight in June 2010 for reasons I'm going to get into in a few moments. It also amends the Police Services Act, to address issues around court security, and sets out stand-alone legislation for the protection of electricity generating and nuclear plants.

I know, when we talk about the matter of courthouse security, that we've had a very stark reminder recently about how vital that is. Like every one of our front-line police officers and first responders, we saw in the recent shooting at the Brampton courthouse that our court security officers also put themselves in harm's way every day they show up for work.

0910

That shooting in Brampton left Constable Mike Klarenbeek seriously wounded, while the disturbed individual who shot him was killed by officers on duty in the courthouse. Obviously, it's a very tragic situation for everyone involved. I know that we're all so relieved that Constable Klarenbeek survived and has since been released from hospital. Security officers like him play a critical role in the administration of justice in Ontario by protecting the public and the employees of Ontario's 167 courthouses.

As MPPs, we have a duty to these men and women to do our jobs by setting the legislative framework that helps them do their good work. Again, that's why I'm so frustrated at the delays we've seen with this government in getting this bill passed into law. As I said, it's a bill our caucus supports. I know the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke expressed his support many months ago. I know it also has—at least, I believe it has—the support of the third party as well as various stakeholders.

I'm also pleased to see that the government has included amendments to the previous legislation, Bill 34, that were made at committee. My concern, though, is that we stand here, days or maybe weeks away from a possible election, so we could see this important bill washed away again as it was when Parliament prorogued. That's more evidence on how the government again continues to mismanage its legislative agenda.

But as I stated, the importance of this bill isn't just what it does but why it was introduced. It was interesting,

taking a look at the former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services' leadoff speech for Bill 51 last year. Speaking to the impetus of the legislation, she said, “Simply put, the time has come to modernize the legal framework under which we protect our courthouses and critical infrastructure such as nuclear and electricity generating facilities.” Well, that's one way to put it, and I agree: The time had definitely come to make some changes, although not for the reasons that I think the minister was alluding to.

Let's make one thing very, very clear: The inspiration of the bill isn't some bright idea from a former minister, who is now the Attorney General, or her staff. It's far from it, and I think you concur. The truth about Bill 51 was that its origins can be found in the fallout from yet another scandal on this government's terrible record—I'm talking about the G20 summit, as we all know, that was held in Toronto in June 2010.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Ombudsman gave it to them on that one.

Mr. Steve Clark: The Ombudsman sure did. He sure did.

What we know is that on June 2, 2010, the Liberal cabinet secretly used the Public Works Protection Act to give special powers to police and security at the summit. They did this by invoking regulation 233/10 under the act, which effectively declared the G20 zone a public work for the period between June 21 and 28.

The June 2 date on which cabinet made that fateful decision to unilaterally invoke regulation 233/10 is important for two reasons. First, it was several weeks before the G20 summit actually took place on June 26 and 27, so there was certainly no urgent or compelling matter of public safety that required the government to behave in this way.

The second, which should offend every member of this Legislature sent here with their duty to represent their constituents and the people of this province, is that we were in session on June 2, 2010. But rather than bring the issue to the House so that MPPs could have their rightful opportunity to debate these extraordinary powers that they were talking about, cabinet acted secretly, behind closed doors. As someone who was a sitting member of the Legislature at that time, I find it insulting. It's an affront to our democratic principles upon which this Legislature and this place was built.

I can't put it any better than the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke did when he spoke for our Ontario PC caucus following the minister's leadoff. What the government did, he said, told MPPs that they didn't count and, by extension, neither did our constituents. And he's right: That's exactly what the government was doing.

I mentioned that I was an MPP at the time. In fact, I had just been elected as the MPP for Leeds–Grenville. I had been a member for not quite three months.

I know I recall being in Toronto just prior to the G20 and—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We've got, probably, seven sidebars going and two or three—really

loud—in the group of the member who is speaking. It would be nice if we cut it down.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't need any backseat drivers on this, thanks very much. So we'll keep it down a bit. If you have a very heated discussion and you need to do it, you know where to go: outside. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker, for your very thoughtful ruling. I appreciate that. Thank you.

I mentioned that I was a new MPP; I had been here not quite three months. The G20 was starting and I remember having an event in my riding on a Sunday and deciding not to drive and taking the train. I got into Union Station quite late—I think the train was about an hour late—and I can remember coming out of the station and seeing this massive wall; it was huge fencing. The entire area around Union Station had been cordoned off with this 9- or 10-foot fencing.

I remember it was almost unreal coming out of the train station at midnight. There was not a person around Union. I remember walking blocks through fenced areas not seeing a person and this was well in advance of the G20. I can remember sitting that final week before the summit and seeing fencing put up behind Queen's Park, in the park just north of this place. I can remember it was very unreal. I can remember taking the train home that week and having 10 or 15 officers at almost every corner of this massive structure of fencing, so it was a bit strange to me. All of that fencing and the other security measures I saw were very intimidating and it definitely changed the place that I had come to visit as an MPP over those three months.

Imagine how upset I was to learn, as we all did, following the uproar in the wake of the G20, that the security measure which would have the most impact on the people—and in some cases, it would change their lives forever—was unknown to me. We weren't part of that decision to invoke that piece of legislation.

I couldn't see it when I left Union because even as a sitting MPP I had no idea the government was up to this. It was offensive. We, on this side of the House, deserved an opportunity to uphold our sacred duty as an opposition to question the government on its plans. Had we been given that opportunity, which the government obviously found too inconvenient, the events that unfolded at the G20 could have been different.

It is through debates like the one we're having this morning that we put the government's plans under the microscope. I'm sure there would have been some tough questions asked about whether it was appropriate to use a piece of legislation drafted at the outbreak of the Second World War, when the government of the day was worried about Nazi spies. Certainly, I think the mood of the province, and indeed our nation, as we prepared for war with Hitler, was much different than it was heading into the G20 summit. If not for the use of a bill that hadn't been reviewed since the end of the war in 1945, then I'm sure we would have talked about the specific nature of powers

being granted to police and security officers for the summit.

There's no question that there was confusion amongst police about exactly what the government had handed to them under the arcane Public Works Protection Act. It's that confusion, I believe, that led to what we now know was the abuse of power by authorities in detaining people at the summit. Let's remember that there were more than 1,000 people who ended up being detained.

I know it's easy to lay the blame at the feet of the police, but let's not get carried away in using the luxury of hindsight. It's this government that made those decisions. I think it's worth noting that prior to the summit, media began reporting that police had been given special powers of arrest. Those reports, I think you'll recall, focussed on a five-metre perimeter on either side of the security fencing that had been set up.

0920

Even as it witnessed the confusion in those conflicting media reports—questions that extended to police and the general public—the government did nothing to provide clarity. They did absolutely nothing. In fact, I think there is merit to the suggestion from many that the government purposely let the confusion grow in the hopes that it would deter protestors from getting too close to the security zone. We know it didn't work out like that. What we got was chaos and the widespread trampling of people's rights.

I think it's important to look at what Ontario's Ombudsman, André Marin, had to say in his report on the G20. He called his report Caught in the Act, and there's no question that he holds the government accountable. It really is some enlightening reading, I have to say, and I quote one passage in particular:

"The Public Works Protection Act under which" regulation 233/10 "was proclaimed authorizes regulations to be created to protect infrastructure, not to provide security to people during events. Regulation 233/10 was therefore probably invalid for having exceeded the authority of the enactment under which it was passed. These problems should have been apparent, and given the tremendous power regulation 233/10 conferred on the police, sober and considered reflection should have been given to whether it was appropriate to arm officers with such authority. This was not done. The decision of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to sponsor the regulation was unreasonable."

That's from the Ontario Ombudsman. That's pretty conclusive.

So what happened was an important message of what can happen when a government is determined to do an end run on the checks and balances that exist in democracy. And sadly, this isn't the only evidence that cutting those corners and a preference for doing things behind closed doors is just another day at the office for that Government. It's a shame.

I think we saw that, certainly, in the Auditor General's scathing special report on the OLG modernization last week. The people of my riding were outraged when the

government agreed—again in secret—to close our OLG facility in the Thousand Islands Casino in my riding and move it to downtown Kingston. Again, that report that was just tabled by the Auditor General confirms that there were a lot of discussions that went on behind closed doors, when they looked my officials in the face and said that everything was open and above board.

Just like in that report this week on the OLG modernization, the fix was in. I think it's surprising that this government waits a year to bring Bill 51 back. Again, I think it's not surprising. This government can't manage the minority; Bill 51 is just yet another example.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to echo some of the points that the member from Leeds–Grenville made, this was one of the most egregious moments in Canadian history, the G20—he's absolutely right. I was sitting in the House; we were all sitting in the House—the House was in session when the cabinet, unbeknownst even to their own backbenchers in the Liberal Party, brought in this regulation—dusted it off—meant to be invoked during wartime conditions, and put it into place.

I was also part of the demonstrations. I was a member of a student Christian movement who did a special service. It was a church service that we conducted downtown among Christians, only to see the riot squad come to us, with full riot gear, pushing us back. I've never seen anything like it. A thousand people were arrested. A democracy was put on hold. How and why? By Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet, in which the current Premier sat. It was absolutely outrageous.

I can say that the only other time in Canadian history that this was matched was under Trudeau the first, and that was the War Measures Act, when the civil liberties of all Canadians were lifted for a local situation.

This is not, in any way, partisan or ideological. People from across my riding came to me and talked to me about how absolutely egregious this was. They couldn't believe that a small group within cabinet could dust off a War Measures Act kind of security measure and put it into place just for what were, in the main, peaceful demonstrators. It was outrageous. I still hear from people about this.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association condemned it. The Ombudsman condemned it. This was not about bad policing; this was about very bad government—in fact, the absence of democratic government. This government should be ashamed of this, and it should be ashamed it's taken this long to correct that simple regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who was having a lovely discussion there, nice and loud.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very, very important piece of legislation.

First, I want to thank my predecessor, the current Attorney General, who, in her role as the Minister of

Community Safety and Correctional Services, has done a tremendous amount of work in bringing forward this particular bill and its predecessor, Bill 34, which has been debated in this House, has gone through the committee and was reported for third reading.

There is no doubt, hearing from the conversation that's taking place in the House and from the member from Leeds–Grenville, that there was definitely a need to modernize a law when it comes to security of public buildings. As mentioned, the previous law was developed around the Second World War when the world was very different; Canada was very different than it is today. I'm very happy that our government, through the advice of Justice McMurtry, has been able to bring forward a modern bill in Bill 51 that will ensure that there is the right balance between providing security and safety for critical infrastructure in our province and that of civil liberties.

Now, Bill 34, the predecessor to Bill 51, as has been noted, had gone through the entire process. It had gone through committee, it had gone through the amendment process. All three parties worked together in making sure that the right set of amendments came forward, and it died, unfortunately, because of prorogation. Bill 51 contains all the changes that were made through the committee.

This bill has the agreement of all three political parties, so I urge that this bill is important. This bill is the right step, and I think we all agree. Let's make sure that we use our time wisely in this House in terms of debating Bill 51, given that it is Bill 34, amended, and pass this bill as soon as possible so that we've got a modern, new bill speaking to the reality of 2014 Ontario in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to see you in the chair this morning, and in good spirits.

The member from Leeds–Grenville, I think, gave an excellent summary of where this bill has been in its previous form as Bill 34, as he said, about a year ago, actually—no, it's two years ago, really. The process had been followed.

Once again, the reminder to all of us of the importance of this place and our right to have a voice is the prorogation. It will reign in my mind as the biggest slap in the face in the province for the time I've been here, in 18 or 19 years. This bill was a victim of that circumstance as well, as the member from Leeds–Grenville pointed out.

It's also important to look at the three sections of the bill, in my case specifically, because the riding of Durham is home to a very large nuclear facility and other power installations. The security for electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities is described in some detail. It's important that they get this thing right.

I think the section that is only a very small troubling concern here is section 6—the powers sometimes need to be examined. "Section 6 sets out offences and section 5 provides a power to arrest a person committing any of the offences, without warrant and using reasonable force if

necessary.” It’s explained in more detail in the full section of the legislation as well.

I’ve visited facilities many times over the years and I’ve noticed already, without this bill being passed, a step-up in background checks of anybody who even comes on the site. You have to have your passport and everything really submitted before you even attend the site.

Let’s be reasonable, I think, as the minister himself said this morning, using a balanced approach, and get it right. We are likely supportive of this bill.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I’ll be presenting my lead on this issue very soon, but I’d like to just give a little bit of a preamble.

G20, from which this bill arrives, was one of the worst civil rights violations in the history not only of Ontario but of Canada. Over 1,000 people were detained, the majority of whom were released without any charges whatsoever. This was a severe abrogation of civil rights, and much of that was due to the Public Works Protection Act, and I’ll go into detail about that.

But it was also about a culture of both government and police, which see dissent as a threat, which see the freedom of expression that is one of the hallmarks of our society—the idea that people can stand up and say, “We do not support what our government is doing,” the freedom to get up and say, “We disagree with the policies of this government,” or the policies that are being enacted worldwide, that is one of the hallmarks of a democracy. That is one of the pillars of a free society: to be able to get up and have the right to dissent. That right to dissent was stifled through a systemic approach to silencing protesters.

In my speech, I want to get into this idea that instead of language like “crowd control” or “suppression” of people who are speaking, we need to look towards language of facilitating democracy, encouraging people to dissent, to voice their opinions in a safe manner. The language and the culture need to shift, both from a government side as well as a police side, to encourage and support people who wish to engage in democracy in the most meaningful way, which is to stand up and voice their expression. That’s what I’ll be speaking of in a couple of moments, so stay tuned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and my friend the unstoppable John O’Toole, the member for Durham. I appreciate his good counsel. Also, I appreciate the comments made by the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who will be speaking in a few moments.

I see that the minister spoke, and that the previous minister is here. I appreciate their work in community safety and corrections. I know that there are a lot of issues going on in the ministry right now. They’re spending

hundreds of thousands of dollars building bunkers for their managers, if they’re called into duty in case the front-line correctional workers are walking off the job.

The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and I toured the Toronto South Detention Centre, and I know that there continue to be challenges to open that facility. I know that there are continuing issues at detention centres like the Elgin–Middlesex Detention Centre and the Ottawa–Carleton Detention Centre that need to be addressed by this ministry.

Here we are with Bill 51. We’re coming up to the four-year anniversary of the G20. I think it speaks volumes that after the public outcry and two scathing reports on the fiasco, this government still hasn’t been able to manage to put those changes into a bill and get the bill passed in this Legislature. I think it’s shameful. I think it’s a sad commentary on this government’s record.

I really hope that the people of Ontario will have their time to cast judgment on this government in the days and weeks ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I believe I have a full hour—at least, I’ve prepared notes for a full hour—so I encourage everybody to sit back, relax and enjoy this discourse on public participation, on democracy, on civil liberties and on the feelings of this government. Hopefully, we can learn from it, moving forward.

I want to begin with saying a very common saying: You need to learn from your history, and if you don’t learn from your history, you’re doomed to repeat it. I submit that this government has not learned from its history, the history being G20, one of the worst civil rights violations in the history of Ontario. They haven’t learned from their history because they are repeating their history in this current piece of legislation. They’re repeating many of the problems that we saw in G20 in this current piece of legislation.

So I’m gravely troubled. I am skeptical of whether or not this government or the minister has read either the report of Justice the Honourable Roy McMurtry or the report written by the Ombudsman of Ontario, André Marin, because this piece of legislation recreates many of the problems that existed in the Public Works Protection Act. So it boggles my mind that you would create some of the very same problems that were identified by Justice McMurtry in this legislation.

Let’s go back to the history, and I’ll tell you how this is so flawed. Hopefully, we can find some amendments to make this more appropriate, more fitting with the recommendations made by Justice McMurtry and more in line with the spirit of democracy and civil liberties and civil rights. Let’s begin with a little bit of the history.

With the G20, we talk about the worst civil rights violation in the history of Ontario. There were 1,105 people arrested during the G20. The vast majority of those individuals were released without any charges whatsoever. This means people were detained, were kept in custody, and their liberty, their freedom, was literally stripped

from them. They were placed into holding pens and holding cells for two days, only to see later on, for many of them, that no charges were laid. Those who had charges laid, the charges were withdrawn. A small percentage, approximately 50 people out of the 1,105 people, actually faced charges. Even half of those charges were withdrawn, and a small percentage actually went to trial. This is absolutely unacceptable. This is such a violation of civil liberties, it is unbelievable.

People, citizens, just watching what was going on in the streets, who stepped outside of their home just to see what was going on—the streets were shut down. They lived there. Residents walked out of their homes to be kettled by police, to be thrown into these cells, these outdoor pens, kept in custody for two days, only to find that they had not committed any offence whatsoever—absolutely unacceptable.

Why did this occur? This occurred for a number of reasons. There are two major reasons why this occurred, and we need to address these two reasons. One, and Justice McMurtry identified this in his report, was that the Public Works Protection Act provides too-broad powers; the powers it allows or confers upon the police officers are too broad. The often-used saying is, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” The idea is if you have too much power, it’s hard to use it judiciously. If you have too much authority, it’s hard to use it in a manner that is fair. That’s why we place limits on the powers given to police.

The problem specifically with the Public Works Protection Act—I quote from Justice McMurtry on page 20 of his report. He’s speaking with respect to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. He refers to that and says, “The report of the CCLA called for the repeal or significant amendment of the PWPA ‘to meet basic constitutional standards.’” The suggestion was that even allowing these extra powers in and of itself may have been unconstitutional. This is exactly what Mr. André Marin says as well: that the powers given to the police were probably unconstitutional to begin with. So off the bat, there is a constitutional violation, let alone the civil liberties violation that actually did occur when we see the 1,000-plus people who were arrested and detained without any charges.

Justice McMurtry goes on to say, “I agree with the observation of the CCLA that the provisions of the PWPA”—the Public Works Protection Act—“led to a ‘lack of clarity as to the scope of the search and seizure powers,’ which created many difficulties and conflicts that probably could have been avoided.”

Now, it’s clear—I want to highlight this—that the lack of clarity as to the scope of the search and seizure powers created the difficulties and conflicts. I want you to remember that, that having too-broad powers creates problems. When you give someone too much authority to interfere with someone’s liberties, it creates conflict; it creates issues. This is something that was identified by Justice McMurtry, this is one of the major problems with the Public Works Protection Act, and this is the very same problem that exists in the current legislation. I’ll go into some detail on that.

0940

The second issue, which is a significant problem, is—let’s make sure it’s clear: The Public Works Protection Act was the responsibility of the Liberal government. They used that power, they used that authority under that legislation, to give the police officers additional powers that they should not have had. That was this government’s fault. This government set the tone and the tone was: “Let us silence dissent. We are afraid of citizens who want to speak their mind. Let’s silence every and all form of democratic dissent. Let’s silence the ability of protestors and those who wish to exert their democratic right to say, ‘Hey, listen, I don’t agree with what’s going on.’ Let’s silence them and let’s catch in the net people who are just bystanders, just people living their lives, who walked out of their homes just to see what was going on. Let’s make the net so broad that we are not only going to silence dissent, but we are also going to just capture and arrest everyday citizens.” That’s what this Liberal government did due to their actions. The climate they created and the tone they set was that dissent was unacceptable.

Of course, we want to ensure that there is safety. We’re not proposing to support violence in any way; however, there’s a huge line, there’s a huge gap, between violence and the democratic right to dissent. There isn’t a blurred line here; there is a huge gap. To put in place protections to prevent violence is fully acceptable. To ensure that people are safe, that’s fully acceptable. But it’s absolutely unacceptable to create zero tolerance, an absolute silencing of dissent, and that’s what this government created.

The second issue is, the police, once given the powers, have a cultural issue that needs to be addressed. I want to make it clear that it is not all police officers who are bad, not in any way, but there is certainly a culture in policing which is combative. The culture which is combative we’ve seen in recent incidents in Toronto involving those with mental health issues, involving the overuse of force against citizens where less force could have been used, which resulted in charges being laid against police officers who inappropriately used force against citizens, against vulnerable people.

There needs to be, again, as the Ombudsman of Ontario has identified, a cultural shift where police officers look to de-escalate conflicts. De-escalation is the number one strategy that needs to be utilized in any sort of confrontation or any sort of conflict, period. The police culture is one of combat between the public and the police, and that needs to be shifted.

When we shift that culture, we can have a facilitative discourse between the police and the public. What I mean by that is—I spoke at a conference of the police services board of Ontario. They asked me to give them some feedback, and I asked the organizers, “Are you sure you want some feedback because some of it will be negative?” They said, “Yes, we want to learn.” I applaud the leadership of that organization for accepting criticism. That’s how you grow, and I told them very clearly.

In their response to the G20, they came up with some recommendations internally and in the internal memo they had created where they looked at some of the issues, they talked about improving crowd control. I said to the members gathered there, “Why are you using the language of crowd control? When you assist at festivals and you’re present, as the police, to help different festivals that occur in our communities, you don’t talk about crowd control. You are facilitating a festival. You are facilitating people who want to enjoy themselves. Similarly, you are pre-emptively creating a conflict when you call it crowd control. If you believe in democracy and believe that people should be able to get together, gather and say, ‘Listen, I don’t agree with what’s going on. I don’t think the government is doing the right thing here, or I don’t like the way that policy direction is headed,’ people should be able to do that.”

Let’s talk about facilitating the use of this right, facilitating democracy, facilitating dissent, allowing people to engage in democracy in a safe way. The language itself, actually, would encourage people to move away from this climate of combat and this culture of combat just by saying, “Listen, let’s look at our strategy around the facilitation of democracy.” How do we facilitate demonstrators? How do we facilitate protestors? How do we allow them to engage in their rights in a fair and safe way, so that people can still engage in the civic process and the democratic process, but also so that the rest of the citizens can be safe, and ensure that they’re not disrupted in a dangerous manner? The language itself suggests conflict. That’s why I speak about the culture that needs to be addressed.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I feel that the member from Trinity–Spadina is enjoying, or at least appreciating, this concept here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Absolutely. I’m all ears.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I appreciate that.

I want to quote from Amy Goodman, the well-known radio host and journalist. Amy Goodman writes in her article, “Dissent Is Essential to Democracy”—first of all, the title says it all. It’s very clear: Dissent is essential to democracy. She writes, “The bulwark against tyranny is dissent. Open opposition, the right to challenge those in power, is a mainstay of any healthy democracy.” I couldn’t have put it in any better words—I think there’s a reason why Amy Goodman is so well respected as a journalist and as someone who is maintaining the strength of independent journalism—it is truly something of grave importance.

If you look through history, any time there has been a significant silencing of dissent; whenever there has been overuse of police force or state powers against the public, that has preceded some of the worst violations that we’ve seen in our history. The climate that’s created by silencing dissent creates an oppressive environment, something that we need to stand against. That’s why it’s so important that we protect the right to dissent everywhere, and that’s why it’s so vitally important that we look at G20 as

an example of how horrible things can be if we’re not cognizant of supporting this right and of encouraging people to engage in their civic responsibilities.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association spoke in great depth with regard to the problems around the G20 around the overuse of police powers and, again, of this climate that was created of silencing dissent. They also spoke on the fact that the government-side problem was that the Public Works Protection Act provided powers that were far too broad.

Now let’s turn to the proposed legislation, Bill 51. Again, before we actually get into the details, let’s talk about some of the history here. We have debated this—and my colleague from the Conservative Party talked about this—at second reading. We had committee hearings where we heard from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association as well as many organizations that had a stake in this matter. We heard their testimony; we submitted amendments; we raised issues. We had third reading debate. But the government prorogued and, as we say in colloquial terms, the bill was killed on the order paper, or the bill essentially ceased to exist. It no longer existed and had to be reintroduced. All the work that was accomplished, all of the effort that was put into place—we now have to do that once again. But there’s a silver lining to that.

While I want to denounce the prorogation and the fact that a bill like this, something that happened years ago now, has still not been rectified, and that this government has been derelict in its duties and in its responsibilities to ensure that what happened at G20 doesn’t happen again—one of the ways was, very clearly, to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, and they have waited years to do that. That’s absolutely neglectful. That’s absolutely unacceptable. On top of that, when they actually had a solution, when they were about to rectify something they should have rectified right away, they prorogued the government. The bill ceased to exist, and we had to start all over again.

The silver lining, though, is that the bill initially had a great deal of problems. I raised those problems—I was very clear on them—and they were not fixed. I attempted to fix them in committee. Again, the government was not receptive.

Let’s go through the problems with this bill.

0950

I started off my remarks by saying that Justice Roy McMurtry, who wrote one of the major reports on the problem of G20, identified one major problem; I hope you remember that problem was that the Public Works Protection Act provided powers that were too broad. When you have powers that are too broad, it is very easy to overuse those powers; it is very easy to abuse those powers. So, powers that are too broad—that’s exactly what Bill 34 did, and that’s exactly what Bill 51 is doing.

First and foremost, when it comes to court security, court security is something that’s been going on. We have a very strong form of court security that goes on, and the major purpose of court security is to ensure that danger-

ous weapons and items don't get into the courthouse. Beyond that, there are police officers who are present in the courthouse, there are a number of security individuals who are there, and the major issue that you need to prevent is weapons and dangerous materials: flammable material, incendiary material, explosive material—you want to prevent those from going into the courthouse.

Another important thing to keep in mind is that one of the other indicia or other hallmarks of a free and democratic society is open and transparent courthouses. In societies that are tyrannous or dictatorships or where there is not full democracy, the courts are not transparent. People don't know what goes on in a court. They don't know what goes on in the legal system; there is often not a legal system. Those are the symbols or the signs where you do not have a democracy.

In contrast to that, where you have a democracy, you have open and transparent courthouses. You can go into a court and watch the wheels of justice. You can go and observe a trial and you can see what happens. Those are important things. Where you do not have that, you don't have democracy.

To encourage democracy, we need to make sure that our courts are accessible. We want to ensure that people can come into court and see what is going on. We want to make sure that people can come into court and there are no barriers to their access to the court beyond the safety requirements of not bringing in explosive material or inflammatory material or weapons, to ensure their safety. Beyond that, there is really no reason to restrict anyone from entering the courthouse. In fact, if there are any barriers, if you require people to identify themselves when they come into the courthouse, there are many problems that can arise from that.

If there is a sensitive case, if there is a case of an individual who has raised some concerns against the government and has protested and maybe faced some improper charges, and you want to go in and support that individual—say there is an environmental group and you want to go in and support this environmental group for its activities in protecting the environment. Someone is facing charges, and you enter the courthouse and they ask you for your identification. They say, "Identify yourself." Maybe you don't want anyone to know who you are. You're not going to commit any offence, you're not bringing any weapons in and you have nothing dangerous with you, but you just don't want your identity to be known because you fear, perhaps, reprisal; or you fear, perhaps, that you'll be identified and that will be used against you in some way. That could be a barrier to accessing the court.

Initially, in Bill 34, this government required that someone had to produce identification to enter a courthouse. No one does that right now. I was a lawyer before I became a politician. We have lines and lines of people who line up to go through the metal detector—

Hon. John Gerretsen: You're still a lawyer.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm still a lawyer. Thank you very much, minister without portfolio.

As a lawyer, commonly you'll see a lineup of people coming into the courthouse. They're going through the metal detectors; they're searched for weapons. They walk through. No one asks them their name, no one asks them to identify themselves; no one produces any form of identification. However, Bill 34 had the requirement that you had to produce identification. Why would you put that in there? What was the point of that? I'm glad you removed it; that was a good step. However, you still require someone entering a courthouse facility to identify him or herself and provide information relating to "assessing whether the person poses a security risk." What does that mean? What is information regarding "assessing whether the person poses a security risk"?

What you're doing here is exactly what Justice McMurtry said not to do: too-broad powers. Why would you require someone to have to identify themselves to enter a courthouse? What difference does that make, what their identity is? You're not running a criminal records check for someone to come into the courthouse. In fact, people with criminal records are going to go into the courthouse because they're going to be answering charges, perhaps. So really, what is the purpose of asking them to identify themselves? What it does do—and also allowing this right, allowing this power that you not only have to identify yourself, but you have to provide information so that the security guard can assess whether you're a risk or not.

Now, again, if we're talking about the Public Works Protection Act, we're talking about powers that were too broad, that created a conflict, that created difficulties, that created a violation of civil liberties. That's what Justice McMurtry said.

Now, to rectify it, you're creating a new set of laws. You're repealing the Public Works Protection Act, which is right, but you're creating, again, too-broad powers. Why would you require someone to have to identify themselves to enter the courthouse? And secondly, why would you require that they have to provide information that the security guard has to assess?

Another problem with the Public Works Protection Act was that it created powers that were too broad in terms of search and seizure; it created powers of arbitrary detention that were too broad. These are two pillars of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 8 of the charter protects us from unreasonable search and seizure and section 9 protects us from arbitrary detention. These are pinnacles of justice.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms that we have in Canada is one of the go-to pieces of legislation in the world, something that supports freedoms and liberties and is something that is pro social justice. It set up a foundation of rights and freedoms that we should all enjoy.

However, inherently in this legislation there are some serious violations to those charter-protected rights. If someone is entering a courthouse, I agree that weapons should be searched for and dangerous materials should be searched for. But let's be careful about our language.

First of all, the law here states that any person entering a courthouse can be searched. The language of “search,” again, is too broad. If you can search someone, that means you can go into their pockets, you can go into their purse, you can go into their material, you can go into their briefcase, and you can search it. That’s not, again, what we’re looking to do. We want to encourage people to come into the courthouse. We don’t want them to be subject to a pat-down, a thorough search of everything they carry with them. We want to screen them for weapons. We want to screen them for dangerous materials. The language should be that people should be subject to a screening with a specific purpose, not just a broad “you can search them for anything,” a specific purpose: Screen them for certain material that we do not want to come into the courthouse, and those materials can be defined. The Criminal Code defines them very clearly.

What are weapons? Materials that can be used to harm another individual: explosive material, material that is flammable, material that is corrosive or chemicals that can cause damage. We want to screen for those types of materials so they don’t get into the courthouse. But we don’t want to allow a broad power of search so that anyone coming into the courthouse can be subject to an exhaustive and thorough search—absolutely not. That’s not what we want to do. That would discourage people from accessing the courthouse, and it’s not what goes on right now.

When you go to a courthouse, you’re not searched, your pockets aren’t emptied and your laptop and briefcase aren’t examined thoroughly. There is a screening process where you walk through a metal detector. Your briefcases and your purses are put through a conveyor belt, and also scanned for any sort of inappropriate materials. That’s the right way to do this. But the way this law is written, it is again providing too-broad powers.

Let’s go further: It’s not only allowing a broad power of search, it also says that your vehicle that’s on the premises can be searched. If you’re a passenger in a vehicle, that vehicle can also be searched. What grounds does an officer or security guard have? If I’m dropping off my brother who’s working at the courthouse—to go to the courthouse—and the security guard has some issues, asks my brother to identify himself and asks some questions around assessing whether he’s a security risk, and at some point arbitrarily determines, “I want to search him and I also want to search the car that he was dropped off in,” that’s clearly a violation of section 8 of the charter. That’s an unreasonable search.

What evidentiary basis, what reasonable grounds do they have to search the car in which you were a passenger? What if there is material found in that car that has nothing to do with the individual himself or herself? What if you were dropped off—you just needed a ride to the courthouse and you got dropped off by somebody else? All of a sudden, that person’s car gets searched and things are found in that car that have nothing to do with the individual initially. These are exactly the reasons why we have the Charter of Rights.

Section 8 of the charter clearly says that there shouldn’t be unreasonable searches. That’s against the charter. That creates a climate of totalitarianism and creates a climate of oppression, to allow such a broad power of search without any reasonable grounds.

1000

Let’s keep in mind that the police always have a power to search someone if there’s grounds. That always exists. You don’t need legislation for that. There’s already thorough, exhaustive jurisprudence where police officers have the power to arrest someone if they have reason to believe that they have committed an offence. They have the power to search someone if there’s reasonable grounds. That always exists. But to give this additional warrantless search power is absolutely unacceptable. It basically goes further than the existing powers of the police—which are properly mandated, which have jurisprudence—and gives them far too much power.

So very clearly, this government has not learned from its history. The PWPA was criticized for being too broad in its power, for giving police too much power—and that it resulted in the G20, which was one of the worst civil liberties violations in our history. Now, there have been many reports about this that talked about the problems of the PWPA. Again, the number one problem that was identified, one of the major problems that was identified, was if you give someone too much power, if you give them too-broad powers, it’s hard to interpret those powers. There’s a lack of clarity, and what happens is, conflicts arise, and abuse of power arises. That’s exactly what’s happening again in this legislation.

This legislation provides powers that are too broad, that are unconstitutional, that potentially violate the charter and that do not address the specific problem that we need to address. What we need to address in our courthouses is security, absolutely. We need to identify what makes a courthouse secure and safe. We need to provide the powers necessary to do that in the most defined way possible so that the powers that are given are not overly broad, and are directly associated with the problem or the risk.

One thing we certainly need to work on is the power around the search. The search needs to be clarified so that it is defined as a screening for weapons or for any dangerous material. I ask this government—I asked before, and I’ll ask the government again—to look at legislation that works. Manitoba—I guess it’s no coincidence that they have an NDP government—enacted a Court Security Act. In that Court Security Act, they were very clear. The Court Security Act in Manitoba uses the language of screening instead of search, because it wants to make it clear that you should screen individuals for certain materials and not allow them in. So the Manitoba Court Security Act has the language of screening. It defines what the purpose of that screening is, defines what material should be screened for—weapons and matters of that nature—and narrowly defines the powers. That’s the right way to do this. If you want to address a problem where powers are too broad, you need to come in with

powers that are more narrow. Solving a problem of a law that's too broad by bringing in another law that's also too broad is absolutely not solving the problem.

Schedule 2 of Bill 51 sets out these two areas where I think the powers are far too broad. Beyond that, if someone is in custody at a courthouse, the search powers there are appropriate, so there's no issue with that. Schedule 3 of the bill talks about security at electricity generating facilities. This is an important place to make a distinction. When it comes to the security associated with electricity generating facilities, there are two absolutely different scenarios, two absolutely different examples.

With the courthouse, there is something of importance. There is something that we need to address in terms of allowing access. People have a fundamental right to access courthouses. That's good for democracy, and we need people to access courthouses.

For electricity generating facilities, that same requirement isn't there. You don't have a democratic interest in entering an electricity generating facility, a power plant, to the same level that you would have with a courthouse. The laws can be more restrictive when it comes to a power plant, and that's acceptable as a social policy. We would understand that the laws defining how you can access a power plant would be more narrow, would be more difficult; it would be harder to access. That's absolutely acceptable. The fact that there are so many similarities between the laws that the government is proposing for a power plant and for a courthouse suggests that this government has not done its homework and thought this through.

A more thorough search of someone entering a power plant may make sense, and that's something that I leave open to perhaps some deputations at committee to address whether or not there are some issues there. But on first blush, it makes sense that a power plant would have a higher level of security. That's something that makes sense. However, even with a power plant, we need to make sure that people have the opportunity, the legal space and the physical space to voice their dissent. If there are issues around the power plant, if there are issues around the type of power, if there are issues around the way in which it is generated and people want to voice their concerns around it, there needs to be a safe legal space as well as a physical space in which they can conduct that.

The reason that I address both legal and physical space is that one of the issues that needs to be addressed is where the perimeters are, so that people who do wish to voice their dissent or their concerns around a particular electricity generating facility are able to do so. But, again, the restrictions placed on someone at a power plant can be certainly higher than they are with a courthouse.

I spoke before about this government's priorities with respect to various legislation. I've been elected for just over two and a half years. The G20 occurred some years ago now, and there are clearly some problems in terms of this government's priorities. They have not addressed

matters that need addressing, and they've waited years for them to be brought forward.

This bill is not associated with any costs; it doesn't cost us anything. It's not going to stress the public purse in any way, it's not going to affect the deficit, it's not going to affect spending, and it's something of vital importance. I struggle to understand why this government has waited so long to bring this bill forward again. After prorogation, when we were so close to passing this bill, when we were so close to repealing the Public Works Protection Act, why didn't this government bring this bill back in immediately and debate it immediately? I struggle to understand why this government has not made this a priority. I hope the government appreciates the damage that the PWPA has left, the mark that it has left on the people of Ontario, and particularly in Toronto.

To this day, people talk to me about what happened. I personally was present as a legal observer during the G20 protest and witnessed some horrendous violations. People peacefully protesting; my colleague from Parkdale-High Park talked about members of her church gathering peacefully. Peaceful protestors gathered and were met with violence, were arrested, were detained. It was absolutely unacceptable. It was something that, as a legal observer, was horrible for me to watch, to see the manner in which people were being treated.

The strategy of kettling: Observers, peaceful protesters, people just stepping outside their homes on Spadina and on Queen Street were met with the police tactic to kettle them, to surround them, to enclose them, so that they couldn't leave. They were detained before they had the opportunity to even walk away. I had cited before—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is the Attorney General paying attention?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I had cited before, 1,105 arrests; 1,105 people detained. The majority, again, were released without any charges. This is not something to be taken lightly. This is not something that should be two and a half years into this session and only now being brought for second reading. This is something that should have deserved more priority. The fact that the government prorogued and didn't bring this bill forward quickly and expeditiously speaks to an absolute lack of respect for how serious this is.

This speaks to the absolute lack of seriousness with which this government is taking this issue. This government has shown that civil liberties don't matter, that the abrogation of one's rights—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, come on.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —doesn't matter, it's not important. They haven't prioritized this bill. The fact that we're debating it only now, two days before a potential budget is coming forward, speaks to the absolute lack of priority. This bill doesn't cost you anything. It doesn't cost you any money. I don't understand why this bill was not brought forward before.

We addressed that the priority is lacking. On top of that, I'm hoping that someone on the government side can answer this question for me: If Justice McMurtry said

that the problem with the PWPA was that the powers were too broad, why would you present a bill that also has powers that are far too broad? Why would you do that? I need to understand that. I'm hoping someone from the government side can answer that question and at least set my mind at ease that they thought this through.

The other issue that I want to raise—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're quite active today.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The other issue that I want to raise is that I'm hoping we're on the same page. I want to ensure, from the government side—Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if we have a quorum at this time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Do we have a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member asked if a quorum is present; I don't believe it is.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to have two important people in the chamber today to watch the proceedings. I'd like to welcome my mother, Susan McNaughton, to the House, and also my aunt, Diane Brewer, who has been the reeve of Newbury for 30 years. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Tashi delek, everyone. Today is Tibet day at Queen's Park. We have Students for a Free Tibet here. We have the Tibetan Women's Association. Of course, the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet are hosting a lunch on the second floor for everyone. Please join us and have some delicious Tibetan food. Particularly, check out the momos. Welcome.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's my pleasure to welcome Sarbjit Deol, who is a very active member of my community and has promoted supports and active living among youth and seniors. Along with him are his friends Paramjit Singh from England and Rajinder Mand. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to present to the House Paul Vickers, chair of Gay Lea Foods and a fellow Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program grad. Welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais être capable d'introduire Michelle Lebel, qui est ici et qui est la maman d'Émilie, page de Kapuskasing. Puis aujourd'hui, Émilie est la capitaine de tous les pages.

I'd like to say again that I'd like to welcome Michelle Lebel, who is the mother of Émilie, who is a page here at Queen's Park from Kapuskasing. Guess what? She's the page captain today. Welcome to mom.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the staff and students from Hillel of Greater Toronto: Marc Newburgh, the executive director; staff Jaime Reich and Julia Bernshtein; and students Bailey Fox—bear with me, Mr. Speaker—Carina Newton, Samantha Cooper, Amanda Osak, Yaron Mildwid, Deborah Benhamu and Cyrus Cohan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Pat Jilesen and Heather Frook from the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture. I don't believe they are in the House, but they are coming to spend the day at Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Page Victoria Recagno has two special guests who are joining us at Queen's Park today: her grandmother, Joanne Belvedere, and her aunt, Pat Plant. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park my constituent Monica Graves, who will be showcasing her one-of-a-kind jewellery line at the Legislative Assembly gift shop today from 11 to 1:30. Everybody, come out and buy something.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to introduce my page captain William Qin's mother, Ning Zhang, and father, Max Qin, from the great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I ask you all to join me in welcoming Ashley Bowes, Oshawa's page, and her mother, Kathreen Bowes. As well, I see that Mr. P. is here with the staff and students from G.L. Roberts.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today from Thunder Bay, sitting up in the public gallery behind me, Mr. Mark Brassard. Mark is here to see his son in action, Thomas Brassard, who's one of the newest pages here this week. Welcome.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome today Diana Hamilton, John Robotham, Wayne Underhill, Tanya Tompkins and her children, Tatiana and Colton Tompkins, who are here today to talk about housing issues and to visit the Legislature.

REPORT, OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a report from the Ombudsman of Ontario respecting his investigation into how the Ministry of Transportation administers the process of obtaining and assessing information about drivers who may have uncontrolled hypoglycemia.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: We're at a turning point in Ontario. I know in my heart that

Ontario can and will do a lot better. After 10 years of higher taxes, deeper debts and skyrocketing hydro, it's time to turn the corner to a time of lower taxes, more jobs, affordable hydro and less debt under our million jobs plan. That's what I plan to do.

Premier, when I see your budget—I mean, pretty well everything now has been leaked by your budget-leaking team—it appears that you've utterly given up on trying to even pretend to balance the budget. You're going to spend money. You're going to increase taxes. You're going to actually increase both the deficit and taxes, which is an incredible feat.

What I see here are deeper debt, higher taxes and higher hydro rates. I have a simple question: Can you tell me one thing that's different about you than Dalton McGuinty?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

All right, let's get to it. The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that, tomorrow, the Minister of Finance will table a budget that is designed to build opportunity today and to secure the future for the people of the province of Ontario. While we're working to create jobs and partners so that those jobs can be created, the Leader of the Opposition seems intent in his proposals to kill jobs, to actually move jobs out of the province.

We're working to strengthen pensions and to make sure that people in this province have the prospect of a secure retirement. The Leader of the Opposition has no intention and, in fact, seems quite content to let people face a future of insecurity.

We're working to build infrastructure in this province, in the GTA, in the north, and the Leader of the Opposition has no—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I get it. You don't want to say the M-word: McGuinty. I understand that. You didn't answer my question about a single difference between your approach and Dalton McGuinty's.

The Premier talks about securing a future for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: After all this, Speaker, all the Premier cares about is securing a future for her Liberal MPPs and insiders. I'm going to stand up for the real people. It's time we had a Premier who was focused like a laser on job creation and a team of confident economic managers to put our province back on track.

Look, I understand why you want to continue the McGuinty record. You were there at the cabinet table. You held senior positions. You should actually be proud of that, that you had senior positions and a big part in the McGuinty team. I don't know why you deny it.

But I think it's time to end this charade. This should not be about a Premier who is looking out for Liberals and Liberal insiders. It should not be about a feckless NDP leader who simply wants to get a contract extension to prop up the coalition. It's time for a change, a focus on jobs. Premier, wouldn't you agree?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, any Premier or, quite frankly, any leader worth his or her salt would be focused like a laser on making sure that good jobs, like those that are coming to the province through OpenText, come to the province. Any leader focused like a laser on the future would make sure that children have the education they need and that post-secondary institutions have the support they need.

We are focused absolutely on the investments that this province needs. If the Leader of the Opposition suggests that there is no need for investment in roads, bridges and transit, in education, talent and skills, if he's suggesting that partnering with industry and business to make sure jobs come to this province—if he's suggesting that's not what's needed, then he's just dead wrong.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, he didn't say anything.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Delayed reaction. Just trust me.

Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: I talk to job creators. I talk to workers each and every day. What they tell me is, they want a fair and level playing field, the chance to succeed. They like our plan to make hydro affordable, to focus on private sector job creation and not more and expensive bigger government, to actually have a government that spends within its means and focuses on the skilled trades. They're confident. They're behind my plan because they want to see hope in Ontario. They want to see people back to work in our province. I'll tell them this: Hope is on its way. Opportunity is coming to our province. Jobs are around the corner. That's my plan.

I'll just ask you one thing: Stop with the higher hydro. Stop with the increased taxes. Stop with the runaway spending. We've had enough of Dalton McGuinty. We don't need his twin. It's time for a bold, new path: Focus on jobs and get Ontario working again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just do not believe that picking fights with organized labour, that cancelling full-day kindergarten, that firing education workers and health care workers, that moving away from a practice of partnering with industry that has been in place in this province for decades—Premier after Premier, government after government, Conservative, NDP, Liberal, all governments have partnered with industry to bring business to the province. And yet the Leader of the Opposition says that all of that partnering is not necessary, that we can just stand back as government and we can let those jobs go to other jurisdictions. I just don't believe that that's in the best interest of the province. You do. There's a real distinction between us, between the Leader of the Opposition and me.

I believe that building our future is what we need to do. He believes that tearing down the province will somehow get us there; it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. For the past two years, we have been looking, as have Ontarians, for the true answers surrounding the cancelled gas plants. So this what they know: The Premier signed the cabinet document authorizing the cancellation of Oakville. They know that she was the campaign co-chair for the cancellation at Mississauga. They know that she told us the cost was only \$40 million; that was far exceeded. She also told us at that period of time we had all of the documents, which we know we did not.

The Premier needs to clear the air because the public deserves to know exactly what her and her transition team knew about the alleged destruction of documents in the Premier's office.

She's threatened to sue my leader and I in the hopes that she could silence us, but we won't be silenced. Today, our lawyers have sent the Premier a letter about the preservation of documents in relation to the cover-up, and we're wondering if the Premier will be open and transparent as she professes and provide us with that documentation immediately, and today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the government House leader will want to speak to the details of what's going on at committee.

But I will just say, as I have said many times in this House, from the moment I came into this job, I was very

clear that we would open up the process, that we would provide information as it was asked for. Hundreds of thousands of documents have gone to the committee. I have appeared before the committee twice.

We've changed the protocols and the rules around retention of documents. I've made it clear across government that everyone understand what documents need to be preserved, and that is because we worked with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Leeds–Grenville, come to order. Second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On top of that, we've changed the process around the location of large—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Northumberland, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —energy infrastructure.

We will continue to co-operate in the investigation.

We'll continue to co-operate with the committee and make sure that the information that is asked for is made available.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, this wasn't a committee question, and if she wants to co-operate with the committee, she could haul Monique Smith and Tom Allison into our committee rooms, as we've requested and as they have denied.

But let's get back to the lawsuit and the billion-dollar question of where the money went and why there were deleted documents in her office during the transition period. If she wants to put this behind her once and for all, we've given her the opportunity. Myself and the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition have asked. We've requested this of her lawyer:

—copies of any and all correspondence between the Premier and the former Premier Dalton McGuinty and/or members of his staff;

—records pertaining to any official meetings held by the Premier and the Premier-designate;

—any and all records pertaining to and identifying the individual staff members who were employed in the Premier's office on January 26, 2013, through to February 10, 2013.

The list goes on.

Will the Premier do the right thing? Release that documentation to our lawyers today, so not only can we defend ourselves, but we can get to the truth of a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader, and the member from Nipissing. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am not qualified to conduct—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I tend to agree with the member from Oxford, but not the way he thinks. So I'll repeat what he said: Enough said. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am not qualified, nor certainly is the member opposite qualified, to conduct a legal discovery process in this chamber, Mr. Speaker.

What I will say to the member opposite—and I wanted to answer this part of the question, because she mentioned two people, both of whom have agreed to appear before committee. They have agreed to appear before committee, and she implied that they had not agreed. I will say again: I will debate the truth and facts any day. I will not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You'll be returned to. The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will not debate unfounded allegations. I will debate facts any day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier said she wasn't qualified; I couldn't have said it better myself.

We know that while documents were being destroyed in the Premier's office, she was holding private meetings. On the same day, February 7, she directed the Auditor General—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will withdraw.

Hon. David Zimmer: I withdraw that I referred to her—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do not make any comment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Let me finish so I can bring attention to the fact that I'm not happy.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will withdraw.

Hon. David Zimmer: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish your question, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hey, guys, I guess we've struck a chord again.

Let's put this into context. On the same day as hard drives were being wiped in the Premier's office, this Premier was holding a private meeting directing the Auditor General to expand the scope of the gas plant cancellation and investigation.

1050

We know that her campaign transition chair, Monique Smith, had many conversations with Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, about the gas plants. We know that

the OPP are continuing to dig deeper and deeper into this scandal and probing it because among all of the Liberals, they're refusing not only to speak to our committee, but also to the OPP.

If she is not prepared to provide us with the documentation, will she call—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This is, quite frankly, appalling, Mr. Speaker. The member stood up here and talked about testimony of Peter Wallace. Let me share the testimony of Peter Wallace on April 15, 2013: "We did not express any advice with respect to the management of political records or the hard drives or the emails associated with the former Premier's office" to the transition team. "The area that we did not cover, because we had no visibility into it whatsoever, was the management and the practice of the former Premier's office with respect to its records management, whether it be hard drives or other mechanisms, of its political records." That is what the secretary of cabinet talked about in terms of his relationship with the transition team.

That is the truth. The truth is that members of the Liberal Party, members of this government, have agreed to appear in front of the committee, unlike the Conservatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said, "As soon as we knew that there was a problem with the girders in Windsor, we stopped the building." But three months prior to that, there was a heated email exchange between senior officials about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I'm looking for quiet.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There was a heated email exchange between senior officials about the safety of the girders. The Ministry of Transportation project lead for the parkway, Fausto Natarelli, wrote to Infrastructure Ontario saying: "I have no confidence in you or frankly your organization to act in the provincial interest ... we need a conversation with more senior officials."

Is the Premier telling Ontarians that these senior officials, who regularly meet with deputy ministers and had this heated discussion about the girders, never raised concerns with anyone?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm just going to go through the timeline once again, because I think it's

important that we deal with the facts. As we've explained many times to the NDP, the issues brought up at the meetings that the leader of the third party is referring to had to do with non-compliance as opposed to safety.

Here are the dates: On June 14, 2013, the minister's office staff were first briefed on the safety—on the safety—and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway. On June 19, 2013, the minister was briefed on the issue of girders; he immediately took action to cease the installation of the girders. On July 22, 2013, the minister called on a group of independent experts to look into the issue and make recommendations to the government. On November 1, 2013, the Windsor Essex Mobility Group and the Parkway Infrastructure Constructors announced that they were rejecting and replacing the girders at no cost to Ontario taxpayers.

That's what happened, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We now know that in the fall of 2012, the Canadian Precast Prestressed Concrete Institute expressed concerns that we know were discussed in the minister's office. They wrote to say: "If non-conforming girders, supplied by non-certified precasters, result in future structural or durability deficiencies that affect public safety, this will impact our industry significantly."

Now, is the Premier going to stand by her minister who says that safety concerns were never raised?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have gone through the chronology of when the minister was informed about and briefed on safety and durability issues. I know, because the minister and I spoke, that he took action right away. That was action that he took because I supported him in doing that, and making sure that—the fact that there was a safety issue meant that we would take action.

Those girders have been removed, those safety issues have been dealt with and at no cost to the Ontario taxpayer, because it was part of the contract. So yes, I stand by the process and I stand by my minister's decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier said yesterday that the minister's office staff were first briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding the girders on the parkway on June 14, 2013, and that the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013. But documents show a decision was made by the minister's office on February 14 not to intervene in the girder issue.

Now, can the Premier explain why she's saying one thing and the documents are saying something completely different?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that those meetings took place, obviously. There was not sufficient information during that time period that the leader of the third party is talking about to make definitive recommendations on safety. There were issues on compliance. I've been through the chronology of the meetings that took place, and I've made it very clear that as soon as the minister knew that there were safety concerns, action was taken. Those girders were removed, and they were re-

moved at the cost of the company. They were not removed at the expense of the taxpayers of the province, and that is exactly what should have happened.

If the leader of the third party is suggesting that we would put people's safety at risk, that is just not the case. We acted as soon as we knew there were safety concerns.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: We on this side of this House have learned to actually rely on the documents, not the word of Liberals.

Documents show that standard girders and installation of panels is not the only concern that senior ministry engineers have with the parkway. Is the Premier prepared to tell us what other structural problems exist on this parkway?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am very, very pleased the contract that was put in place was designed such that an issue like this could be dealt with in the way that it was. I'm very, very pleased that the safety of the people of Ontario was protected because action was taken as quickly as it was and, quite frankly, that those girders were removed as soon as we knew there was a potential that there was a safety issue.

I would think the leader of the third party should actually agree that it is a very good thing those girders were removed, should agree that before more of them were put in we stopped that process—we stopped the construction so that the testing could be done. Once that testing was done, the girders were removed at the expense of the company, and that's exactly how it should have happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Government documents show that senior ministry engineers are concerned about bearings, protection boards, waterproofing and poor mixture of concrete. These are not isolated in one area. These structural deficiencies cover different stretches of the parkway.

Now, what is the Premier prepared to do to ensure the safety of the parkway and the tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border who will be using this road each and every day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we are prepared to do—and I think the leader of the third party is bringing forward accusations that are unfounded. What we will do is we will continue to work with the engineers to make sure that at each stage, if there are concerns, we will take action, just as we did with the girders, exactly as we did with the girders. If non-compliance issues transform into safety issues, then we will take action and make sure that the number one priority is the safety of the people of this province, as we did with the girders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Senior engineers have flagged a variety of structural issues. These are not unfounded accusations. These are senior engineers who have found

these problems, issues including bearings that did not meet code requirements.

Internal correspondence shows, "This situation is not unlike the girders issue. It is true that these bearings are being installed and are not approved." Bearings are what the bridges on the parkway depend on for their stability.

1100

How can the people of this province trust this government on transit and infrastructure projects worth billions of dollars when this project, a major international border crossing—one that the Premier used to brag about negotiating—has so many serious, serious safety problems?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, there is nothing more important than the safety of the people of Ontario. So we will continue to work with the experts, with the engineers to make sure that all of the parts that go into the building of the parkway are safe. Ontario has the safest roads in North America. We will continue to make sure that the Herb Gray Parkway is part of that.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that there is going to be a budget introduced tomorrow. I have been trying to get a meeting with the leader of the third party since February, to have a conversation about how we might work together to pass the budget. My hope is that she will agree to meet with me so that we can look at a path forward. I know that the Leader of the Opposition has no interest in working with us, but I hope that we will have an opportunity to meet, because a lot hangs in the balance, including continuing to be able to build infrastructure in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, in Saturday's London Free Press, your Minister of Health claimed that she didn't know why the Ministry of Health used an irrevocable trust agreement, which would have allowed two Liberal-friendly groups to pocket up to \$40 million—this, despite the fact that she personally signed off on two separate renewals.

I have since learned that this government set up irrevocable trust arrangements in a number of ministries over the past 10 years. Premier, will you immediately order every ministry to disclose how many trusts were created, what organizations ran them and how much taxpayers' money was involved and possibly pocketed by groups that may be affiliated with the Working Families Coalition?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite is talking about the Nursing Retention Fund. When

we took office, hospitals were running massive deficits, and they were signalling layoffs of nurses as a result of PC cuts. That was unacceptable to us, so we took action to reverse that drain on our nursing workforce. We put strict controls on the funding that was put in place in terms of the Nursing Retention Fund. The Minister of Health has been working to see what we can do to make sure that the Nursing Retention Fund is utilized.

But you know, I think, really, what the member opposite is doing once again is undermining the work of organized labour in the province. That's really what this is about. We put in place support for keeping nurses in the province. What he wants to do is to undermine that relationship.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia—Lambton will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Premier, we know that it is extremely unusual to use an irrevocable trust to fund government programs.

This morning, I met with Ontario's Auditor General in follow-up to my letter requesting that her office immediately launch audits on all irrevocable trusts that this Liberal government has set up and maintained. One of the documents I turned over to the Auditor General is confirmation from a Ministry of Finance official that, over the past 10 years, these types of funds were set up in at least seven government ministries, including the Ministries of Education, Aboriginal Affairs, and Agriculture and Food—three ministries that you know quite well.

Premier, will you confirm this morning that you have never set up or helped maintain an irrevocable trust during your time in cabinet?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nice.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The point of the Nursing Retention Fund was to make sure—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, that's what the question is about. It's about the purpose of setting up such a fund.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I have to take direct action, I will.

Premier, finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So the—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You must not be qualified to answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton is warned.

Mr. Mike Colle: How many warnings?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglington—Lawrence, maybe one.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In January, the minister met with nursing organizations to talk about how the fund was being managed and to make sure that it could be used in the best way possible to retain nurses. That's what it was about.

The reason the member opposite is asking this question, as far as I can tell, is that he wants to undermine the reputation for competence of these groups. His quote from April 28: "Acting Premier, the most generous possible interpretation of the Nursing Retention Fund boondoggle is that the RNA, RPNAO and ONA are utterly incompetent project managers and cannot be trusted to serve as stewards of taxpayer money."

So, Mr. Speaker, this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Given some thought, I'm going to ask the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex to withdraw and the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound to withdraw. One at a time, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Speaker, Premier Wynne promised that her government would be open and transparent and that her ministers would correspond on government business using official channels, including ministerial email accounts.

Despite the Premier's claims of a more open government, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure regularly corresponds on sensitive ministerial business with senior Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Infrastructure and Infrastructure Ontario staff, as well as government legal counsel, using his Liberal caucus email account.

Why are there no emails at all from the minister's email account regarding the girders as part of the 1,200-page FOI request submitted on August 12 last year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, again, both the minister and I have answered the questions around the chronology of how we took action on the girders. We've answered that question a number of times. I will continue to answer the question.

The primary concern is that the safety of the people of Ontario be protected. The primary concern is the one that motivated the actions. As soon as the minister was aware that there were safety concerns, the construction was stopped, and the girders were tested. The girders were removed at no cost to the people of Ontario, and that is how the system should work.

I would just say that the member is well aware of this, because he was included in the process. He was brought

up to speed. He was part of the discussion with the minister, so he knew all along how the girders were being dealt with, and the safety concerns and the actions that we were taking.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Premier, I've seen the evidence. I've seen the documents; I know what's in there. Don't try to pull that bluff with me.

According to government documents, there are only four email chains that included messages from the minister about the girders between June and August 2013. Four second-hand emails were the only correspondence the minister sent about the girders that we received in the documents included in the FOI request.

Is the Premier telling the people of Ontario that she believes the minister only exchanged four emails about the Herb Gray Parkway while it was going off the rails, or was he purposely concealing public information?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member opposite is reading the email because he received it through freedom of information. Government business is subject to freedom of information no matter where it takes place.

What I can tell you is that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was having regular meetings. He was having face-to-face meetings. He was on top of this issue and he was making sure that he understood what the concerns are and he was taking appropriate action.

That's what he was doing. That's why the girders were removed. That's why the safety issues were dealt with. That's why the safety of the people of Ontario is preserved: because of the actions that the minister took, because of the meetings that he was attending.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As we all know, the Ring of Fire is a historic economic opportunity for northern Ontario, but it's bigger than that. Just like a rising tide raises all boats, the Ring of Fire is going to raise not just the north, not just Ontario, but all of Canada.

That's why it's a shame that the federal Conservatives have completely abrogated all responsibility on this file. But we here, the Liberal government, continue to show leadership.

Minister, I understand that you and our northern colleagues, this past Monday, made a major announcement—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay will come to order.

Carry on. Finish.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I know that the minister and our northern colleagues, this past Monday, made a major announcement regarding the Ring of Fire. Could he please tell us more about that?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the question. Indeed, this past Monday I was very excited to announce, alongside my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources, that our government is prepared to make a commitment of up to \$1 billion to develop all-season infrastructure in the Ring of Fire.

We are making tremendous progress on this multi-generational project that will not only see benefits for the north but for the entire province and, indeed, for the country. Just this past week, Premier Wynne and I also signed a historic landmark agreement with the Matawa First Nations communities that will not only ensure that the First Nations and the province can work together to advance Ring of Fire opportunities but will also ensure that their communities significantly benefit from Ring of Fire opportunities.

We're very excited about it—a great commitment for the province, but the federal government needs to come in now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. A billion dollars—wow. If only the federal government was listening. I know that, once this project gets going, it's going to create jobs right in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. Minister, could you, through the Speaker, tell us how you are driving this project forward?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, my thanks to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. We're very proud of our government's commitment to this project.

We've said many times in the past that we were prepared to make a very significant investment in Ring of Fire infrastructure. Now that we have announced our financial commitment to the project, we are indeed providing clarity and making incredible progress on this multi-generational project.

In order to maximize the Ring of Fire's potential—not just for the province but for the entire country—we need the federal government to follow through on what they have said many times: This is a project of national significance and national benefit. The expectation we have is that they will be a partner in this project, they will match the dollars that we're committed to paying, and they will help with the two major infrastructure pieces: the industrial park and community access, which is very important to the First Nations.

My focus is to get the federal government on board. If they're on board, this is a better project; it's a bigger project; we're completely—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINISTRY GRANTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Premier, the auditor's report on the Ministry of Citizenship's year-end slush fund made it

clear to your government that the availability of grants must be communicated to all potential recipients.

We discovered that, as Minister of Agriculture, you've been giving away year-end grants to hand-picked companies. There was no publicly available application; in fact, companies were only invited to apply because of their relationship with staff in your ministry.

Minister, do you believe that the rules of financial accountability don't apply just because you're trying to get money out before year-end?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually would have expected that the member opposite, a former Minister of Agriculture, would have understood that it's very important that we work with food processors and with the agriculture community to make sure that they can make the investments that are necessary.

The investments that we're making through the Local Food Act—for example, I was at a bakery just on the weekend. The applications had come in. Those grants—I think it's over 60 grants to promote local food and make sure that they have the capacity to grow their enterprise.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know what? These are businesses all over the province. They are businesses that have a wide range, whether it's bakeries or whether it's farmers' markets and local food strategies. All of that promotes local food and allows food processors and food producers to do better in the province. I would think he'd be supportive of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Premier, you must have missed the original question about which grants I'm talking about. Premier, these grants included \$1 million given to a distillery even though their project didn't create a single new job. Over \$6 million went to two companies that had almost completed their building projects on their own.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, second time.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This is the worst type of picking winners and losers. Competitors had no idea the grants even existed and couldn't apply. They were reviewed by a panel whose membership isn't public and then approved by you personally.

Premier, at any time during this process of hand-picking, did it occur to you that it was wrong to do it this way?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has made a couple of allegations. If he's talking about McLaren's Distillery, that was a grant that was made through the Local Food Fund. If he's talking about Hiram Walker and Sons, \$1 million, that actually did create 10

new jobs. Hiram Walker currently supports Ontario's agriculture sector by purchasing 4.2 million bushels—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The folks who work at Hiram Walker think that's pretty good. The people who work at St-Albert Cheese Cooperative think that's pretty good, too, that they will be able to create 10 new jobs. The people at Thomas Canning, with the \$3-million investment creating 40 new jobs—the people who have those jobs and those companies think that it's a very good thing that they have a government that works with them and is in ongoing conversation with the sector to find those companies that need the support to help them to grow. They think that's a good idea, and I do, too.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

In their rush to put casinos in communities that don't even want them, the Liberal government dealt a blow to the horse racing families in Fort Erie and across the province.

The Auditor General's report found that the Liberal government's OLG privatization plan didn't have a clear business case, and they failed to consult communities. The report also points out that the OLG's net profits are down over \$600 million from previous years and that the government doesn't really know what effects cancelling the Slots at Racetracks Program will have on the industry.

Do you continue to stand by your misguided OLG privatization plan that decreased profits, threatened to put casinos in municipalities that didn't want them, and almost destroyed the horse racing industry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I came into this job I made it clear that I was very concerned about the fate of the horse racing industry. The member opposite knows that the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium has signed a three-year agreement. This is great news for Fort Erie. Jim Thibert said it was a brilliant move.

We have made it clear that investing \$500 million over the next five years to put the horse racing industry on a solid and stable track to sustainability—that is what we will do.

I know that the member opposite really understands that the decisions that were made about Fort Erie were the right ones, that the community was very eager to make sure that these agreements were put in place. They have been, and I'm very pleased that the horse racing industry has a season this year and in the mid- and the long-term will have those seasons.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: The horse is out of the barn when it comes to the failed Liberal plan for OLG, and horse racing families are stuck with empty stalls on farms across the province. Even the Auditor General says the government's modernization plan nearly put down the horse racing industry.

Is the government finally ready to apologize to the horse people in Fort Erie and guarantee a long-term future for our historic track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly what the member opposite is talking about is what I have been working on since we came into office. Since I came into this office, I said that we needed to take a second look at what was happening with the horse racing industry. My predecessor had set up a panel of Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson. We took those recommendations. That's what the \$500 million is about.

I want the horse racing industry to have a bright future. I want the integration of horse racing with gaming in this province. I know that that is a challenging process, but I want the member opposite to know that I am on it. I am working to make sure that integration happens, because that's what will ensure the long-term success of the horse racing industry, if gaming and horse racing can be integrated. You know that's the case and you know that's the way forward.

EDUCATION

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. We know that Ontario's publicly funded education system stands as one of the best in the world. The progress that we've made is the result of the dedicated work and vision of our government working hand in hand with the education community to create a world-class system.

Recently, the minister engaged with my constituents and many others across the province to reach a consensus on a vision that will carry our province forward. The result of these consultations was recently released in the Renewed Vision document. Can the minister please update this House on the renewed vision?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South. Speaker, we do have a lot to be proud of when we look at our accomplishments in education. Over the past 10 years, we've been able to raise the graduation rate from 68% to 83%, and 71% of our children in grades 3 and 6 are meeting the provincial standard. That's up from 54% 10 years ago.

But we know that building on that success—there's more to do. We need to move our system from great to excellent. That is why, on April 9, we released a renewed vision for education in Ontario entitled *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*.

The document outlines our four renewed goals for education: achieving excellence, ensuring equity, student well-being and enhancing public confidence. As the member mentioned, we travelled all over the province and found—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the minister for bringing us up to speed on the renewed vision.

It is important for us to continue to look forward on how we can take our system from great to excellent. Excellence is preparing our students to be personally suc-

cessful, economically productive and actively engaged as global citizens.

This renewed vision is about the next 10 years and beyond. We have an opportunity to seize on the progress we have made and build on it to create a brighter future for our children.

Technology has changed the classroom tremendously, impacting the way the students learn and teachers deliver their lessons—directly impacting their job prospects as they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Can the minister update us on what our government is doing to support the renewed vision in creating a modern, innovative and responsive system?

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things we heard in our consultations when we talked to business, post-secondary, not-for-profit agencies and communities was a common theme: the impact technology is playing in our classrooms, especially with younger, digitally native students. So when we looked at our vision, we knew that we had to look at technology—the use of technology.

I was pleased to announce our support for the renewed vision by investing over \$150 million over three years to give learners and educators access to new technology in the classroom. This funding will support improved student achievement through innovative teaching and learning practices. It will help us to take best practice on how to use technology effectively and spread it throughout the province. These—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, the Ontario Energy Board reported tomorrow's hydro rate hike is because of renewables coming on the grid over the next 12 months. Renewable energy producers—including wind, solar and biomass—provide 10% of the total supply of electricity, yet receive 31% of the subsidies that ratepayers must provide in the form of the global adjustment. The total bill for the average customer will be nearly double the Bank of Canada's core inflation forecast.

Minister, the people of Ontario, as well as hospitals, curling clubs, and Royal Canadian Legions, to name a few, cannot afford higher energy rates simply because you refuse to acknowledge your mismanagement of our electricity system. Why are you doing nothing to ensure that Ontarians are able to pay their energy bills and prevent future rate hikes?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I do have some numbers on electricity rates in the province of Ontario. As I've indicated previously, Quebec Hydro annually does a survey in North American cities of electricity prices. At the end of 2013, the last year that they have compiled it—I'll give you the rates: the rate per kilowatt hour in Ottawa, 12.39 cents; Toronto, 12.48 cents; Edmonton, 13.9 cents; Calgary, 14.8 cents; Halifax 15.45 cents.

They often refer to US jurisdictions as having much better competitive rates than we do. In Detroit, it's 15.54 cents, in Boston it's 16.5 cents, and in New York it's 21.75 cents. Our rates are competitive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Clearly, the big Liberal wheel keeps on turning or, more appropriately, spinning. But we need to be serious for a minute.

Back to the minister. On April—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Listen. On April 27—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Listen. On April 27, a small airplane crashed on the site of NextEra Energy's South Dakota Wind Energy Centre, killing all four passengers. This is very, very serious. Four people were killed because they crashed into NextEra's wind project in South Dakota. An Associated Press report notes that one of the wind turbines was in fact damaged. Turbines have been ordered to be taken down around Chatham airport, but nothing has happened. Samsung is throwing money around and wanting to change approaches to the Kincardine airport, yet my letters of concern are not satisfactorily addressed. Collingwood airport is threatened by industrial wind turbines as well, and Peterborough airport has stated that wind turbines are threatening the safety of pilots.

When, Minister, are you going to admit that the siting of industrial wind turbines has not been properly done?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our renewable process—the Ontario Power Authority has a process. Contracts are awarded, and they go through a process including the REA, or environmental assessment, process. There's an opportunity for all objectors to come before the Ministry of the Environment to review that. Even after that, there's an appeal, and even after that there's a judicial review that's possible.

You know what? There are huge developments that take place across this province for buildings, for real estate developments. They have an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. They can go to judicial review. The same legal rights that exist for all these other types of developments exist for wind. It's fair, and it's reasonable.

They plan on cancelling 250 contracts. They're going to put the province at risk to \$20 billion in legal claims.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

New question.

1130

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Every time this Liberal government fails to deliver for Ontarians, they just make more announcements and

empty promises. Today in London, they are doing it again on transit. The Premier has promised Londoners high-speed rail, but it's hard to take her seriously because her own ministers can't get their stories straight. The transportation minister has boasted publicly about bullet trains travelling at 320 kilometres per hour, but the education minister says it certainly won't be bullet trains and she honestly doesn't know what her colleague was referring to.

Speaker, will the Premier level with the people of London and let us know which Liberal cabinet minister we should believe?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here is the thing. What we know is that there needs to be better transportation in this province. We know there needs to be transit in all parts of the province, including the corridor from Toronto to London. So the announcement that the minister is making today is a very important one. I know that the connection between Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo, the high-tech hub where OpenText is bringing all those jobs, and then between Kitchener-Waterloo and London—we know that that is a very important corridor for business in this province. So we are making the investment. We are going to work with the private sector. We are going to work with the communities to make sure that those connections are put in place.

What I would like is, I would very much like to be able to have a conversation with the leader of the third party about what parts of the budget, what parts of transit investment, what parts of infrastructure investment she might be willing to support. I haven't been able to have that conversation, but I'm very much looking forward to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As much as the people of the London community want to believe they will get high-speed rail, they can't seem to trust this Liberal government. Like all Ontarians, they know that empty Liberal promises don't create jobs or provide transit relief. They know that if the Premier was serious about her latest scheme, she would have told us the cost and timeline.

It's time for the government to stop playing games with people's lives in London and start providing real transit relief to families and businesses. When will the Premier admit that she has no idea how much high-speed rail will cost and has no plan to make it happen in London?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have to say, coming from a party that has no plan on building transit, it's pretty rich. If the leader of the—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I would suggest to the member opposite is that she look at the projects that are under way if she wants to look at our reliability in terms of delivering. I would suggest that she go to the Eglinton Crosstown and look at what the boring machine is doing there, look at the progress; look at the progress

on the Union-Pearson rail line; that she look at the York-University line, that she go to Ottawa and look at the work that's being done there, because there is building happening in this province because of our commitments to transit. We will follow through. They don't have a plan. We will make those trains run.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Residents in my community of Scarborough Southwest, including myself, are glad to know that our government is committed to protecting our pets and animals from abuse and neglect. Our government created the strongest animal welfare legislation in all of Canada that increased OSPCA agents' ability to inspect and enforce the law. The government also strengthened penalties, including jail up to two years, fines up to \$60,000 and a potential lifetime ownership ban for animal cruelty.

But some of my constituents are concerned that cases of animal cruelty may be going unreported. Can the minister tell us more of what the government is doing to make sure our pets and animals are being protected?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As the proud owner of a dog named Bella, a husky and German shepherd mix—she'll be happy that she's mentioned in Hansard now—I thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for asking a very important question. I want thank my predecessor, the Minister of the Attorney General, for all her hard work on this very important file.

Just last year, our government announced \$5.5 million in annual funding to the OSPCA to enhance their abilities to enforce the OSPCA Act. This funding will help the OSPCA to establish a toll-free 24/7 hotline and centralized dispatch service to report animal cruelty. It will create a team of specially trained investigators whose responsibilities will include cracking down on puppy and kitten mills. Also, it will deliver specialized livestock training for investigators in the agriculture sector, conduct regular inspections of zoos and aquariums and establish and maintain a zoo registry to support twice-yearly inspections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you for that answer, Minister. My family owns three abandoned cats, Buffy—or Buffalino, as I call him—Mishi and Jack. There are a lot of animal lovers in Ontario, and we know that most people take good care of their animals; however, there are troubling instances of abuse and neglect that cannot be tolerated. When someone feels that an animal is in distress, it is important for those people to call the OSPCA.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I think the 24-hour call centre will be an important tool for the OSPCA

agents, as it will enable them to respond to situations of animal abuse and/or neglect in a reasonable time frame. When can we expect the 24-hour call centre to be up and running?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This is a very important issue. Protecting our animals and preventing cruelty to animals is very important to all Ontarians, and I'm really proud that the OSPCA made this very important announcement last Monday by launching the 24/7 call centre.

We should be very proud of the fact that we are the first government to provide the support necessary to help launch such an important initiative. Now there is a toll-free, 24-hour phone number available to report suspected animal cruelty.

If you believe that an animal is in distress, call 310-SPCA—that's 310-SPCA—any time of the day; any day of the year. This is just another example of how we are enhancing the responsiveness of investigators to animal welfare complaints for urban, rural and northern communities.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question today is to the Premier. There's a gap in the child welfare system that leaves 16- and 17-year-old children who find themselves in need for the first time without access to services. This systemic flaw creates street kids who have increased rates of hospitalization, incarceration and failing in school. These forgotten children under 18 are having their human rights violated under your watch. I'm surprised that, actually, you haven't been sued yet.

Bill 88, the Youth Right to Care bill, closes this service gap and protects our youth. As the self-proclaimed social justice Premier, explain to us why you're stalling third reading of this bill?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the question with respect to our youth, with respect to what we are doing to protect our youth and with respect to Bill 88.

Yes, Bill 88 has gone through standing committee and, yes, we've had that discussion. But let me just say very clearly that we've had this discussion many times in terms of what this government is doing in terms of our commitment to our children, in terms of our commitment to vulnerable youth in our community, in terms of listening to our youth and the Youth Leaving Care recommendations that came forward, and everything that we are doing to ensure that they can transition into adulthood and have all the same opportunities that every child has across the province.

In fact, yes, we are committed to our youth, and we will continue to do what we need to do to ensure that all our youth are protected across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Premier, with due respect, this question is for you, because you have the power to make this change. This bill came directly from the children in

care. These came from the Youth Leaving Care hearings two years ago.

You're now responsible for the only jurisdiction in the developed world that neglects these children. I can only draw the conclusion, Premier, that you don't care.

These kids end up getting picked up by high-cost reactionary services eventually: jail, hospital, rehab services or even worse. If they're lucky, they end up on adult welfare.

We need to ensure that every child under 18—full stop—has access to a child welfare system and the best opportunity to succeed in the future. Stop banking on a possible election to save you from acting as the social justice Premier. Do the right thing, right now. Tell us when these youth will become a priority for you—not for your minister, not for your House leader—for you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's have this discussion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to have somebody leave.

Finish, please.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the bill coming forward, we know how that works in terms of government House leaders having the discussion about bills coming forward into this House, but let me just talk about some of the stuff that we have done on behalf of those recommendations that came out of that report.

I think everyone knows what we have done. We've raised monthly financial support for our children. We're developing mentorship opportunities. We have new—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: —we have new youth-in-transition workers helping our youth. We have absolutely been listening to our youth, to the recommendations that they have brought forward. We will continue to do so, and we will continue to do what we need to do to protect all our youth.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for York-Simcoe on a point of order.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

My point of order is that I have an overdue order paper question. It's to the Ministry of the Environment: Would the Minister of the Environment please give the status of the cleanup order and other orders to comply that your ministry has issued to the Thane smelter in Georgina in the riding of York-Simcoe?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is my understanding that indeed that is overdue, and I would defer to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, at the request of one of my favourite members particularly, I would be happy to comply at the very earliest opportunity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While this process is going on, I would love the members to take a break on the heckling.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Including those who want to do my job.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock on a point of order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a point of order to the Premier: Do you approve of one of your ministers calling one of the members of this Legislature a windbag?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I have to be perfectly honest with you: This guest isn't here, but she is watching. She's approximately four days old. She's my great-niece, and I'd like to welcome Ellie Grace Baldwin to the political world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you to the member from Sudbury for the mystery guest.

Further introduction of guests?

Mr. John O'Toole: I have two introductions today. One of them is here now, so I'd like to introduce Edrick Dunand. Edrick is a very good friend of mine, a constituent, a very successful businessperson. Welcome to Queen's Park; I believe it's your first time. Good luck on your business ventures as well.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JONATHAN JENKINS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to speak directly to two young children today: Maizey, who is six, and Dexter, who is nine. I want them to know that their dad, Jonathan Jenkins, was a genuinely decent man. He was warm-hearted, he was funny and he was fair.

Maizey and Dexter, I know what it's like to lose a dad, but I don't know what it's like to lose a dad at your age. That's why MPPs and press gallery journalists want to share stories and our memories with you.

One of my favourite stories is how your dad ended up taking over John Tory's chair after Mr. Tory left this Legislature. Antonella Artuso says that big, awkward red leather chair is the most uncomfortable in the Sun bureau, but your dad won it fair and square after a hard-

fought negotiation with the CTV bureau here. Antonella said your dad looked like the crown prince of Queen's Park when he sat in that chair.

He was also the barefooted Winnipeg Jets-loving drummer who organized Newzapalooza. He organized it to support children's aid societies and raise some money for them.

But his love, Maizey and Dexter, was reserved for the two of you and your mom, Nancy. He talked about you all the time. Your pictures were all over his desk and all over his office. He would do anything for you, and he would drop everything for you.

As you grow older, Maizey and Dexter, I want you to know that there's a Pink Palace where there once worked a crown prince journalist. It's filled with people: journalists, MPPs, civil servants and political staff. They have a lot of great stories for you, and you're welcome to visit us in this chamber anytime to hear them.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. John Vanthof: The Ministry of Natural Resources has just announced that moose tags will be cut by 18% across the province. In some areas, like wildlife management unit 28, commonly known as the Kirkland Lake unit, tags have been cut from 457 to 30, a staggering 93%.

According to the ministry's website, unit 28 faces more hunting pressure than any other area in the province. Considering that fact, one would suppose that this unit would merit at least standard attention from the MNR, but that has not been the case. The aerial moose count on which current tag numbers are based was carried out this January. Moose counts should be conducted every three years, but counts have not been conducted in this unit for five. A timely count could have identified problems before numbers dropped to crisis levels.

Quoting the MNR website: "We conduct scientific research and apply the findings to develop effective resource management policies." That is hard to believe when the ministry can't even conduct regular moose counts. Has the budget at the ground level been gutted so badly that basic wildlife management can no longer be carried out?

We have waited years for the promised MNR moose management plan, dubbed the moose project. In unit 28, it could soon be called the moose reintroduction project.

When will the minister release the report, and, more importantly, will the current government ever give northern wildlife management the resources that it needs?

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Last week, I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of l'Académie Alexandre-Dumas in Scarborough–Guildwood.

C'était une ouverture très réussie.

Some 1.4% of the people of my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood claim French to be their first language, and I'm so proud of this government's investment in French education for Franco-Ontarians.

Une éducation française est importante pour la préservation de l'histoire ontarienne et canadienne.

It was a privilege to join Principal Robert Beaudin and the wonderfully talented young people at this school during constituency week. I even had the honour of watching a performance of The Three Musketeers by the students, in honour of the school's namesake.

Investments like this one in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, as well as investments that are being made across the province, are part of our strength as a province, et rendent la province de l'Ontario plus dynamique et diversifiée.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise in the Legislature today to speak again about the review of the OPP billing process, which was supposed to bring clarity to a complicated formula, but it seems we are no closer to a fix. I've heard from property owners from across my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who expressed their deep concern with increasing policing costs and the proposed new OPP billing model.

In Haliburton county, which will be devastated by this new model, they will see their collective annual policing costs rise from \$3.3 million to approximately \$8.5 million, equating to tax increases between 20% and 36%. Families in Haliburton are already falling behind, with one of the lowest average household incomes in the province.

Out of 300 municipalities serviced by the OPP, 190 would see cost increases under the new formula. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has failed to look out for the 190 who will see increases in their police costs, with no increase in service. Many municipalities, like those in my riding, simply cannot absorb such significant cost increases from the provincial government without causing serious hardship to property owners. For over a month, my requests for meetings between the county of Haliburton and the new Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services have gone unanswered.

Haliburton county is ready to act and has orchestrated a day of action for tomorrow, May 1. OPP May Day urges residents to bring the message directly to the government here at Queen's Park with phone calls and emails and to taking to Twitter with the hashtag #OPPMayday.

JAKOB BEACOCK

Ms. Catherine Fife: Earlier this month, my community lost a young boy. Jakob Beacock was 13. He was a cherished son, respected friend and a proud member of the minor bantam Waterloo Ice Wolves.

Jakob was a spirited "I've got your back" kind of hockey player. He was well liked by all his friends. He was deeply loved by his family. Jakob was a good kid.

He was struck down by an appendicitis-related illness. During his illness, and later when he was on life support, this community rallied around him and his family. Jakob's grandmother was quoted as saying, "I can't believe all the support. It does our hearts good, all this positive love."

When his family lost Jakob, his parents, Pam and Dan, with the support of Trillium Gift of Life, made the courageous decision to donate some of Jakob's organs. All that positive love that his family and friends shared with him over the course of his young life lived on through organ donation. His lungs and eyes were donated, and his heart went to a little boy. We know of four people who now have hope in their lives.

1510

I can tell you that as our community mourned with the Beacock family, many people commented that the thought of organ donation was of great comfort to them, and it was also an opportunity to talk openly and honestly about the need for more organ donation.

April is donor month. One organ donor can save up to eight lives. Currently, there are 1,500 people waiting for organ donations.

The entire community in Kitchener-Waterloo sends the Beacock family their love and prayers.

Jakob's memorial was truly a celebration of life filled with love and happiness, and at the memorial, his dad told me that Jakob would have wanted his organs donated. So not only did his family honour his wishes; they also honoured his life. That is the power of organ donation.

LOCAL FOOD

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Today I bring good news from my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. This past Saturday, I was joined by the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Premier Wynne, in Scarborough to highlight the Local Food Fund. This program promotes and offers support to local businesses. More importantly, it supports companies that use locally grown ingredients.

The Local Food Fund is a key component of this government's broader local food strategy to promote the good things that are grown, harvested and made across the province. With this funding support, food processing companies are able to grow and expand their operations while offering Ontarians more choices for tasty and locally made foods.

Stonemill Bakehouse, which is located in the centre of Scarborough–Rouge River, uses their support funding to create healthy, great-tasting artisan breads, including their new Prince Edward county rye. Specifically, the funding from the Local Food Fund will help Stonemill Bakehouse market and increase distribution of its new Prince Edward county rye bread across the province, expand the use of rye grown in Prince Edward county in

its other breads, strengthen their supply chain with Prince Edward county farmers and challenge other retailers, bakeries and farmers to establish local food supply chains.

Speaker, the products from Stonemill Bakehouse are not only healthy for you, but they're healthy for our local economy.

Supporting the agri-food industry goes to providing business opportunities for farmers across the province, while providing local jobs in places like Scarborough–Rough River.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last Friday, I visited EFS-plastics in Listowel, along with our energy critic, the member from Nepean–Carleton. She has shown tremendous energy in this role, and I want to thank her for listening to us in Perth–Wellington when this government would not. I especially want to thank Martin Vogt, president of EFS-plastics, for hosting us and sharing his experience with this government's failed energy policies.

EFS-plastics has one of the most modern plastic recycling and reprocessing systems in North America. The company is an environmental leader and supports many jobs in our area. Mr. Vogt told us that this government's high-cost energy policies are putting a brake on expansion and a brake on investment with respect to his own company and many others.

EFS-plastics currently pays around \$80,000 a month on hydro. Five years ago, its bills were half that amount. If this facility was located in Quebec or New York, the company could save up to \$350,000 a year on energy costs. That is a staggering number, and it effectively tells investors and manufacturers to stay away from Ontario.

Even worse, there is no relief in sight—at least as long as this government remains in power; recent announcements by the Minister of Energy would confirm that.

Skyrocketing energy prices are making our manufacturers less competitive—they have told us so. High prices are costing our businesses large and small.

Shame on this government for playing political games with hydro in this province.

COMMUNITY LEADERS IN DURHAM REGION

Mr. Joe Dickson: Unfortunately, there have been a number of community leaders in Durham region who have passed away recently.

Henry Tillaart Sr., the founder of Dutchmaster Nurseries in north Pickering, passed away in March. He was a devout, hard-working man, and the family continues as a large employer and vibrant business today.

Gerry Armstrong, founder of Armstrong Homes and inductee of the Home Builders Hall of Fame, as well as the past president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, passed in April. I knew him well. He was most generous and, above all, he was a great family man.

And, unfortunately, one of our great leaders, the vibrant Irishman, the Honourable Jim Flaherty from Whitby—my wife and I were among the thousands who attended the final respects for Jim in Whitby, and all of us here, of course, attended the very beautiful ceremony as part of his funeral.

Most recently, though, I'm heartbroken at the loss of a very great friend, Mr. Ron Halliday. As a matter of fact, my colleague Bas Balkissoon just reminded me that he had a 25-year friendship with him.

Ron worked with Cougs Investments and Coughlan Homes in Ajax, but his legacy is defined by his always-generous charitable work throughout the entire Durham region.

I first met Ron when I was a councillor in Ajax in 1983. He was a butcher, a farmer, but someone who had—

Interruption.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I apologize. That's mine, and I—

Interruption.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I think Ron Halliday just turned my BlackBerry on.

He worked with the principal at Cougs Investments, Jerry Coughlan, to create one of the most beautiful facilities in my area and all of Durham region, the Deer Creek golf and country club, with 54 holes of golf—as well as the Deer Creek community, and homes throughout all of Durham region.

As well as being an environmentalist, Ron was a supporter of some of the great causes in Durham: the Ajax Bomb Girls campaign from the war effort; the Durham West arts association, our Sunny Days for Conservation group; our most beloved Ajax and Pickering hospital; and the Abilities Centre in Whitby, where he was a director on the board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap, please.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Christine Elliott and Jim Flaherty had done such great work to bring that centre to Whitby.

To give this House an example of Ron's generosity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap, please.

Mr. Joe Dickson: In 2005, my wife and I attended the wedding, and they simply wanted a donation, to make a large contribution to the hospital.

Our sympathy to his wife, Carol; Ron's children, Kathy, Robert, Dennis, Sherry-Lee, Danette and Ashley; and Ron's two grandchildren, Jennifer and Joseph.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of these gentlemen, I want to tell you—please, may they rest in peace. They all had big hearts and souls.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to first introduce constituents of mine, Jim and Lorraine McEwen. Welcome to Queen's Park. Jim is a stroke survivor, and my statement is about post-stroke physiotherapy treatment.

I rise to make this government aware of how they are treating stroke patients in Ontario today. The constituent who I've just introduced suffered a major stroke in 2010

and spent some time in hospital receiving physiotherapy before being discharged. He needed additional therapy then, as close as possible to the stroke event, to have a complete and more fulsome recovery.

Since then, Mr. McEwen has been forced to pay thousands of dollars out of his pocket for the additional physiotherapy sessions, in hopes that he can return to work. Mr. McEwen wants to continue to work as a very skilled and successful engineer. He wants to contribute to Ontario.

On occasions, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has denied extending OHIP coverage to Mr. McEwen—and thousands of patients like him—because of his age. The minister has stated that OHIP-funded physiotherapy treatment is only available to those under 19 and over 65. Mr. McEwen was 55 at the time of his stroke in 2010, at the height of his career, and is now 59 years young, meaning Jim and his family must struggle for another six years before OHIP funding will be available to him.

Jim's wife, Lorraine, has been his strength and his courage for many years. Mr. McEwen and his family simply cannot afford to wait another six years in the hope that they will once again be eligible for OHIP funding.

We need to take action today to close this gap and provide OHIP funding for post-stroke patients for additional physiotherapy treatments. It's the right thing to do, and I ask the government today to do it.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1474486 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr32, An Act to revive 1474486 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1520

MADE IN ONTARIO MATTERS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMPORTANCE DE LA FABRICATION EN ONTARIO

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 193, An Act to require the disclosure of the country of origin of motor vehicles and their components sold in Ontario / Projet de loi 193, Loi exigeant la divulgation du pays d'origine des véhicules automobiles vendus en Ontario et de leurs pièces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The bill requires advertisers and persons or bodies that sell or offer to sell new motor vehicles in Ontario to clearly indicate in the advertising and sales contracts the country in which the vehicle and its constituent components were produced and the proportion in which each of the components makes up the vehicle.

Sellers are also required to clearly indicate the information on motor vehicles that are delivered to purchasers. It is an offence to contravene the requirements.

Essentially, in today's changing society, it's important to inform individuals where vehicles are coming from, and that's exemplified in the bill's short title, which is, Made in Ontario Matters.

PETITIONS

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I agree with this petition, I'll affix my signature and I'll send it to the table with one of my favourites, Zahra.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Mennonite Savings and Credit Union.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I am pleased to affix my signature and give this to page Victoria.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the construction industry is a major economic driver, providing jobs for more than 400,000 Ontario workers, accounting for almost 6.5% of overall employment; and

"Whereas all contractors, including subcontractors, are frequently hindered in their ability to create jobs, contribute to apprenticeship growth, meet payroll, tax, WSIB, pension, employer health tax, and health and welfare benefit obligations, and stimulate the Ontario economy by slow or delinquent payments, in many cases by several months and more than double than any other sector; and

"Whereas hundreds of thousands of Ontario construction workers rely on being paid promptly in order to meet their own financial obligations; and

"Whereas no other industry anywhere in Canada tolerates this type of delinquent payment practice; and

"Whereas the United Kingdom, Ireland, European Union, Australia, New Zealand, 31 US states for private sector projects and 49 US states for public sector projects all have prompt payment legislation in place for the construction industry;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law the Prompt Payment Act, 2013, otherwise known as Bill 69, immediately."

I'll send this with page Ethan.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from M^{me} Ginette Lefebvre de Lively et Ron Bradley de Chelmsford, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Victoria to bring it to the Clerk.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition and give my petition to Emma.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I read this petition today on behalf of my constituent Mr. Jim McEwen, who composed this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible" and to maybe return to work and become productive citizens and taxpayers in Ontario;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving

additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians," perhaps baby boomers, "to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs" and potentially sell their home to raise funds to pay for their therapy;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment" policies.

1530

I call on the minister to endorse this, and I sign it, endorse it and send it to the table with Ashley.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Ethan, who will bring it down to the Clerks.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present the petition. I will affix my signature to it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

"Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

"Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

"Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and give this petition to Gabriel.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition.

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work ... ;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I affix my signature and pass it to page Ashley.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over northeastern Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of" the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Victoria to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the infant and child development program funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is severely underfunded in Northumberland county and is placing the services to infants and children whose development is at risk in jeopardy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To restore appropriate funding levels to the infant and child development program for Northumberland county to ensure that infants and children whose development is at risk are receiving services comparable to other jurisdictions in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, and I'll affix my name to it.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, these petitions just keep coming into my office.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Brendan to bring it down to the Clerks.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

LONG-TERM CARE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. You're most generous with me today—very appreciated.

I have this petition that comes from all over, but mainly around Shelburne. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes and hospitals; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes and one of two without oversight of hospitals...."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes and hospitals in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Gabriel to bring it to the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for petitions has passed.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Earlier today, the member from Timmins-James Bay, Mr. Bisson, submitted a notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege. The notice alleges that the answers made in Monday's question period by the Minister of Transportation to a question about a construction project were deliberately misleading and therefore a contempt of the House. After serious consideration, I am now prepared to rule on the matter without hearing further from the member, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

In his notice, the member contends that part of the minister's answer was at variance with the ministry's documents in the member's possession, which were released pursuant to a freedom-of-information request. The so-called McGee test for determining whether a statement by a member has deliberately misled the House was set out in a ruling I made yesterday.

1540

In yesterday's ruling, I also made reference to the ruling by Speaker Carr on June 17, 2002, which I think bears on this matter.

"The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

Because he is not relying on the McGee test for this case, the member for Timmins-James Bay is instead effectively asserting that the documents he provided me represent, as Speaker Carr put it, "tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved." As a corollary for the McGee test, this information would have to be of a

quality at least as high as that required to meet the McGee test itself; that is, it would have to be completely unambiguous, irrefutable proof of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature.

I accept that the member holds the strong view that the freedom-of-information documents do achieve this. But even he states in his submission that the documentation "suggests" certain discussions occurred. A suggestion is not proof.

For my part, in order to concur, I would have to make many large assumptions and inferences about what was discussed under certain agenda items at the meetings referred to in some of the documents provided to me, and even who was at those meetings. None of the material in any of the documents points to an intentional and direct contradiction of what the Minister of Transportation has said in this House.

With respect to the member from Timmins-James Bay, I must conclude that the case at hand amounts to a disagreement as to fact, something the Speaker cannot resolve. I appreciate that members often hold divergent views and interpretations on issues that are the subject of questions or debate. If so, the matter can be pursued, as has occurred in this case, in question period and other parliamentary proceedings. It is not a matter of contempt.

For the reasons indicated, a prima facie case of contempt has not been established.

I do thank the member from Timmins-James Bay for his notice.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and talk about Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act.

Speaker, there are a number of things that should be brought to light in this debate, and my colleagues in my party certainly have addressed quite a few of these.

In the bill summary, it says that the bill would prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, restaurants and bar patios.

I think most of us were around when smoking was allowed in bars. Whether you were a smoker or a non-smoker in a bar, it could be a very dangerous place to be. It would make your eyes water. It certainly added to a certain aroma that would be found in a bar or restaurant, and usually it stank that bad that you didn't want to be

there after a while. However, it was an accepted part of society that smoking be allowed in these places.

I know that the changes to the legislation that prohibited these types of actions were welcomed by both smokers and non-smokers because it created an environment that was healthier and certainly more pleasurable to be in.

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association has raised concerns about outdoor patios and that it might have an effect on their businesses, and I can understand where they're coming from. I'm certainly not well versed enough or haven't studied this well enough to say whether it would have an adverse effect on their business or any effect on their business, but they do raise concerns over this part of the legislation.

I know from some places that some people attend, I've been told, there is outdoor smoking on some of the patios. I myself haven't heard a complaint from anyone as long as the people who are smoking are far enough away from the doorways and don't bother you. In fact, I've even seen people who have gone out there who don't smoke and ask some people who are smoking if they wouldn't mind putting their cigarettes out. It's been my experience that people are genuinely interested in doing that and do actually agree to put their cigarettes out because they are bothering other patrons.

I think it's part of society now that we do know the adverse effects of smoking. We do know that people who don't smoke but who have to be around or are forced to be around smoking certainly can get a disease from it, and I specifically talk about cancer and other diseases. It's perfectly legal to smoke in this country, but smokers by and large don't want to, as I say, force their habit on someone else. People are getting to be more educated that way and certainly want to not infringe what they're doing on somebody else. I think that's something that people certainly do.

I do have some reservations about this not smoking on patios, because I think, properly guided, the owners of the bars can certainly set up places where it's not going to be a bother to people who don't smoke. I also say, people who do smoke seem to understand that it does bother other people and will put out their smokes if somebody complains about it.

I think that the next thing I would like to talk about is the doubling of fines for those who sell tobacco to youths. These fines would be the highest in Canada. Fines are an interesting thing. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't. In fact, I know from years ago that some people would take the chance on paying the fine because they were making too much money doing the illegal part, so I don't know whether this is something that will help. Certainly, it's scary to have to pay that much money if you happen to get caught selling tobacco to people you're not supposed to be selling tobacco to. I think it's up in the air whether that is going to do a lot of good.

I would suggest that there are a number of illegal smoke shops in this province that probably need to be

tended to a lot sooner than later on the sale of illegal tobacco. There seems to be a resistance of this government to ask the proper officials to do this. I think we all know we're talking about rolie cigarettes. I think that's what they call them. You can buy bagfuls of them. It is illegal to sell these tobacco products to just anybody; however, it's not a hard thing to do. Any one of us can drive by some of these places, see the hole in the fence, walk in and purchase these things, and nothing probably will be done about it. I think there are some issues of selling illegal tobacco in this province that should be targeted a little bit more.

I know some of my friends in my riding of Perth-Wellington, where we have coffee, who happen to sell cigarettes too. They're pretty cautious on who they will sell a pack of cigarettes to, because they do know they can lose the privilege of selling these things, for one thing, and lose part of their income, plus the fines are involved. So I've seen them asking for proof of age from young people that I know are old enough to legally buy these items. They're pretty cautious in what they do.

1550

I think we really have to look seriously at the sale of contraband cigarettes in the province of Ontario. And it should be done sooner than later, because if you enforce one part of the law, such as convenience store owners or gas stations and keep going after them all the time, in effect, it increases the business of contraband cigarettes. That's the way it works. If people want to smoke or have any habit, whether it be drugs or tobacco, if you cut off the supply over here and you don't cut it off over there, they're going to get it anyway. We need to focus on both sides of this equation. I don't know exactly why there is a reluctance on the part of this government—we've seen this going on for years—to crack down on this type of thing.

I remember one of the first interviews I gave to a local radio station in Wingham, CKNX, and a caller called in. My friend from Huron-Bruce was there that day, and we both didn't have a very good answer for this question. A guy called in and he said, "What about banning cigarettes altogether, completely cut them off from Ontario?" We didn't see that work very well during Prohibition. I never thought of it that day, but I think if people want to do something bad enough, there will be a way of doing these things.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It drives it underground.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Everything drives it underground. We've seen that Prohibition didn't work back in the 1920s and early 1930s. In fact, they repealed the Volstead Act because of that. There were too many people making a lot of money, and some of them were on our side of the border. I'm sure the Speaker would probably know who they were. But it just didn't work. You just can't do those things and expect people to conform to them.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: They're doing that now; they're going to raise taxes on cigarettes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I know this government is talking about raising taxes on cigarettes, which I don't

really have an issue with. It's something that people want that they don't need.

Anyway, this act would also ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products targeted at kids, to make smoking less appealing to young people. That's a good thing; I think it's something that needs to be done. I, personally, have never seen a flavoured cigarette. I don't know whether they taste like bubble gum or strawberries, or what they do. However, smoking is a habit, and once you get into the habit of having something in your hands all the time and putting it in your mouth—I'm sure that the flavoured cigarettes are something that can promote smoking to kids. That's something that I'm glad that this legislation looks at.

This bill would also prohibit tobacco sales on post-secondary education campuses and specified provincial government properties. I don't know why it doesn't have all provincial government properties but just specified ones. Again, you're opening up, maybe, a can of worms here where you are allowed to do something over on this side of the street and not on that side of the street. I think that's something that, if this bill gets to committee—and I'm sure it will—should be looked at rather strongly.

There's a section in the act, too, that—I think any government has to be very, very careful when they increase the powers of their employees to do things. What I'm talking about is that it says, "Subject to subsection (4), for the purpose of determining whether this act is being complied with, an inspector may, without a warrant, and at any reasonable time, enter and inspect..." Powers are being increased to inspectors, which can be dangerous. It can be dangerous.

We've seen this with different agencies with this government. I've specifically talked about OSPCA, where in my riding there were some hardships on a number of farmers who were doing what they had always done. They were raising their animals. They had always taken animals that probably wouldn't make it to market but there was some value to them and gotten them slaughtered at the local butcher. In fact, one fellow was giving the meat away to charity and was subject to over-ambitious inspectors.

Like I said, this man is my age or maybe a little younger. He had done this all his life on his hog farming operation and was put through a court—he didn't go to court. He decided to pay the fine because he was so upset. He didn't want his neighbours, he didn't want the people in the city communities, reading about a court case because he was quite embarrassed about the whole thing. But he shouldn't have been embarrassed. It was a matter, in my opinion and I think the opinion of a lot of people, of too much power given to someone in the civil service who maybe didn't have the proper education to make the judgment call as to whether this farmer was doing things in an improper way.

I can remember from my own farming experience that not every animal is going to make it. I mean, animals die or they have something wrong with them where they can't make it to market, so we would try to get something

out of them, whether they were used for barbecue pigs or whatever.

So I see this section here about how they can enter places without a warrant at any reasonable time and inspect. I think these people should have—I know the police use a term called "reasonable and probable grounds" to enter a place. In fact, most police have to get a warrant on reasonable and probable grounds if something is going on. I wonder if that should be a part of the act that is strengthened a little bit. It's one thing to suspect there's an illegal activity, but just to go kick a door down or demand to enter a premise because you think something is happening, and have the authority to do that, to me, is dangerous.

I would suggest that if and when this gets to committee—I'm sure it will at some point—this should be strongly looked at. It should be very strongly looked at.

My son is a police officer, as his wife is, too. I know that the amount of paperwork and proof that they have to have to execute or even to get a judge to sign a search warrant is quite extensive.

Like I say, I don't want someone who has the powers that are suggested here to get into trouble, and I certainly don't want the proprietor of a premise to get into trouble either, because he thinks that maybe this person is acting illegally. So I would suggest that that section, 4(2), be looked at rather seriously before we give anybody any more power than we are giving them now.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Sorry?

I'm sorry, Speaker. I don't know what they're talking about. Anyway, I'll continue on.

Mr. Michael Prue: You're like the rest of us. We never know what you're talking about.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We're in good company, aren't we?

There's another thing here that's interesting. I used to do a bit of trucking for a living, and I know they have changed the rules on smoking in vehicles now. If you own your own truck, you can smoke in your own vehicle. If you drive for a company, you're prohibited from smoking in that vehicle. I can remember, I was just a part-time driver and I used to travel the Midwest. I'd go out there once in a while. I used to go to Quebec and out west in Canada, hauling livestock. So I drove other people's trucks all the time. It was interesting. The guys who had no smoking in their trucks would have a sign right on their window: "Don't smoke in the truck." For the other guys who smoked in the trucks, it was an issue. Even the guys who smoked had problems driving in the trucks of guys who smoked because of the smell in there and the other health issues involved.

1600

Society has changed over the years. I think we can all remember back to when the tobacco wars were going on in the United States a few years ago and the big tobacco companies were fighting the medical establishment over whether cigarettes caused cancer. There was all kinds of money spent during those wars, or I call them wars. I

don't think there's any doubt in anybody's mind that this is not a great thing to do.

I perceive this as an act to improve what we've been doing already—I think it is—and I do believe that we will certainly like to see this get to committee, but strengthen it up a little bit, especially with some of the things I'm talking about.

The sale of promotional items is always an issue with any product. We want to be honest with what the product does or what it could do, and I know that in this country especially, cigarettes are advertised in a not very flattering manner, which is fine. If you go to the United States, it's a different program they have over there.

I have seen an increase in smoking on television. I have seen an increase in smoking in movies. That was pretty much banned a few years ago. They never did it. Actors didn't want to be accused of helping to promote something that wasn't good for the populations of their countries. I don't understand why they have started to allow this again or why movie productions or TV are allowing this to happen again, because they are receiving some criticism over it. I can understand that.

Like I say, some of the points in this bill, with the flavoured tobacco products—we've got to stop that business. Doubling fines for selling tobacco to youth and also making a real effort to look after the contraband tobacco that is being sold in this province are some of the things that I would like to see done when we're dealing with this product.

It has been an honour to stand here on behalf of our party and our leader, Tim Hudak, to talk about this bill. I know that all the members of our party, when it comes to these types of things, will support legislation of this kind. I would like to see some of the points I've made brought up in committee, and maybe we can strengthen the bill a little bit more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening to the member from Perth–Wellington. I think what's really key in this entire debate about smoking as it relates to Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, is the prevention piece, because the evidence in the research is very clear around nicotine addiction. The smartest money, the smartest investment, the smartest strategy, is to prevent people from getting addicted.

I think there is some very conclusive research, also, that shows that flavouring cigarettes has great appeal for youth. I have two teenagers in my home. Their interest is piqued by a flavoured cigarette. There's a genuine curiosity about that. I think we've known, from past practices, as the member from Perth–Wellington has identified, that the addictive qualities of cigarettes are, some people say, even more addictive than heroin—which makes sense that we would actually have a smoking cessation strategy in the province of Ontario, which would be effective. It's a smart investment to get people less addicted and hopefully to stop smoking.

When I was a teenager in Cape Breton—I've always wanted to say that, but it actually is true—you could go

down to the corner store and you could buy a single cigarette for 15 cents. So many youth in Sydney, Nova Scotia, became addicted to smoking because they could buy single cigarettes for 15 cents. They couldn't afford a whole pack, but they could go down and buy a single.

We know that this age group is incredibly susceptible and easily influenced, so I think that this piece of legislation is incredibly important.

I want to commend the member from Nickel Belt for championing this cause for so long. It's good to see the piece of legislation that's before us, and we will make it better, as well, because that's what we do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to rise to make a few comments on the remarks from the member for Perth–Wellington. Bill 131 is a very important amendment to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which, of course, our government introduced a number of years ago. It builds on that and continues this war against tobacco.

It has a number of very important provisions, as it is, of course, going to ensure that there is no sale of promotional items together with tobacco products. The sale of flavoured tobacco products is prohibited. Then, of course, it goes into the powers of the inspector.

I want to assure the member for Perth–Wellington that these inspectors are public health inspectors. They have been specially trained as provincial offences officers. They know exactly how to ensure that reasonable and probable grounds are used before there is any power of entry that is in fact utilized.

Having been a former medical officer of health and having had jurisdiction in this particular area of ensuring that there are appropriate safeguards for business, as well as the duty to protect the public—this is an important balancing of those two important criteria when an inspector goes into a premise, and I have every confidence that our health units are going to be able to ensure that the public interest is preserved in this way.

It's important that we move this to committee. I think all parties are no doubt going to support this piece of legislation, and I urge us to move it forward as expeditiously as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to sit and listen to my fine seatmate from Perth–Wellington, Mr. Pettapiece. He's doing a great job here at Queen's Park, and I know the people in his riding are very happy with the work he's doing here.

Obviously, we do have—I think my seatmate made these observations—some real issues, but again, this bill, on the whole, in theory, is a good bill.

What we should be focusing on is the point that inspectors can go onto your property without warrant. I personally have some concerns about that, and that's one section of the act that I think many people would be very concerned about. There's a due process that we expect

here in a democracy like Canada, especially when it comes to personal rights, freedoms and property rights. To allow this section of the act to pass—I think we would be remiss to say that that would be acceptable.

The other point that my seatmate raised was the contraband, the illegal cigarettes that are in these smoke shops throughout the province. This government has not done its due diligence to enforce the illegal contraband and trade of cigarettes in the province of Ontario. What kind of fair and just society are the Liberals actually trying to establish when they don't even enforce the laws and regulations of the land?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's wonderful to stand. I listened very closely to the comments that my colleague from Perth—Wellington provided to this bill.

I have a personal problem with this entire issue. I quit smoking, I would say about 19 years ago. As a father, I'm no-holds-barred with my boys. I sit down with them and I talk to them on a consistent basis. You know, you try to tell them the facts of life, and you try to explain things as they are. You relate it to your personal issues. I've suffered a lot of family losses due to cancer, and we can directly relate it back to smoking cigarettes.

1610

When I see these candy-flavoured products that are out there—and there is so much pressure on our kids and youth that are out there today that this just pulls them in just a little bit more. A couple of weeks ago, I think all of us in this House received a variety of what these candy cigarillos look like, or these candy cigarettes or tobacco that are available to these kids, and it's so easy for them to fall into that trap.

I have to say that I'm dealing with that particular situation right now, and I'm hoping it's through good discussions that I'm having with one of my boys that we'll be able to turn him and bring him back on the right path. It is so easy for these kids, especially with today's society, that they fall to that peer pressure and they just stray.

I think it's up to us as parents to try and provide that information to our kids, but also as politicians to make sure that the right regulations are there, the right policies are there, and that we have the right education so that we can provide that information to our kids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Perth—Wellington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank my colleagues in this House from Kitchener—Waterloo, Oak Ridges—Markham, Northumberland—Quinte West—who is always a pleasure to sit by—and Algoma—Manitoulin.

I would like address something that the member from Oak Ridges—Markham stated about reasonable grounds. If you read the bill, it says that “an inspector ... without a warrant, and at any reasonable time...” It says nothing about reasonable and probable grounds. I think that's something that should be looked at very seriously, and that's why I brought it up.

I don't have an issue with inspectors doing their job, but, gosh, we could get into all kinds of trouble if we give too much power to people. They need to have that kind of—I wouldn't call it restraint, but I think they have to have guidelines, that they must have good, reasonable and probable grounds to go into any premises. I would certainly ask for that if somebody was wanting to come into my house or my business. They better have a good reason for being there. Certainly, I think that should be looked at in the act.

The member from Northumberland—Quinte West raised—

Interjection: The fine member.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The fine member—raised the issue of smoke shops. We've got to get this stuff under control. We are not going to be doing our job if we don't do that.

To the member from Algoma—Manitoulin: That's why they make these flavoured things; they make them sellable. That's what companies do. They make it easy for purchase of these things, and unfortunately, they make things easy for our most vulnerable in this whole issue.

So, again, Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to join the debate on this particular issue, Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and in its short name, it's known as the Youth Smoking Prevention Act.

I have 20 minutes ahead of me, and there's so much to speak about. I appreciate the comments from my colleague and neighbour from Perth—Wellington. He's hit so many topics square on the head of the nail, but I also need to acknowledge and share some appreciation of our entire team within the PC caucus and support staff. We have a great group, and today I especially want to give a shout-out to Vanessa, Carly and Laurie. It's phenomenal, the manner in which people just chip in and get the job done.

That brings me back to Bill 131. I really want to stress the importance of consultation. One thing about this bill: When I meet with associations representing small businesses, I hear time and again, “There's been no consultation.” I just share that as a flag and a recommendation to the Liberal government: that in terms of consulting with stakeholders, this is an area, indeed, that is in very much need of improvement, and I think in this case they too could do better. But set that aside, this is an important bill, an important topic.

My colleague from Perth—Wellington touched on contraband. I too want to touch on that a little bit, but I also want to recognize the good work of the Ontario Lung Association. I'm pleased to be on the non-partisan committee that is addressing healthy lungs. It's headed up by our member from Whitby—Oshawa. I look forward, in the coming days, to meeting with the Ontario Lung Association and specifically talking about the Ontario lung action plan. We can't turn a blind eye to the proper

steps in helping people manage a variety of issues that affect lung health.

I just want to give a shout-out to Barbara, whom I met. She was advocating on behalf of people suffering with IPF. She joined me in my office with the IPF foundation president, Robert Davidson. I have to say that in my own local riding of Huron-Bruce I have an amazing IPF advocate in Hugh Detzler, from Mildmay, Ontario. We need to be mindful of everything they are going through. As you in this House know as well, my father suffered from COPD.

There are so many diseases that could be better managed, and possibly even averted, if people didn't smoke; we know that first-hand. I would not be responsible in my critic role if I didn't say that if we can get smoking under control, we won't have to see people suffer. When people suffer, where do they want to be? They want to be at home. To enable them to be at home, they do need some equipment, some support machinery. With the cost of electricity going through the roof, I really don't know how that would happen.

Thank you, Speaker, for your leniency in allowing me to get those messages out.

I want to go back now and focus on the Canadian Cancer Society; specifically, some information they have available with regard to tobacco and cancer. It's important that people watching today know that about one third of all cancers can be prevented by eating well, being active and maintaining a healthy body weight. Tobacco use is responsible for 30% of all cancer deaths and 85% of lung cancer deaths, and remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Ontario.

The proposed ban on the sale of flavoured new and smokeless tobacco products needs to be very seriously considered in terms of all the ramifications. But this particular bill is looking at reducing incentives, especially for youth, to try or start using these products. Recent studies have shown that youth are using tobacco products, and some flavoured ones at that—57,000 Ontario youth in grades 6 to 12 reported using tobacco in 2010 and 2011. I'm sure that all of you in the House today find this number staggering, and we really must work together to stop this easy access to kids by the tobacco industry.

When I think about the studies that are being done, I think about a young man who is going to be a newly minted nurse—I think on June 13, to be exact. His name is Zach Ashley. As part of his placements over the last year, he did work with public health, much to our member opposite's point that public health does take a look at health studies specifically associated with tobacco use.

Zach worked with a public health officer and was incognito, going into convenience stores trying to buy tobacco. I have to say that he shared with me that many, many convenience stores and small shops are working hard to do their part. I'm sure there are a number of people watching, in terms of small business owners and the convenience stores association, who would appreciate hearing that I've heard first-hand how store owners are

trying to do their part in terms of proper management of tobacco products.

Also, it's interesting that another job he had, which was not glamorous, was counting cigarette butts in schoolyards. The majority of those butts, I'm afraid to say—Zach went to nursing school at University of Windsor—were not recognizable in terms of brand names, and that's a big concern. If we're going to seriously address a smoke-free Ontario—and again, a nod back to the short title being the Youth Smoking Prevention Act—this government has to step up to the plate and mean business. It's one thing to talk the talk, but it's another thing to walk the walk. If we're properly going to be going down this path, we need to seriously address contraband tobacco.

1620

I go on about the Cancer Society and the information that they provide. I think there are some simple things. We can say no to contraband tobacco. We can say yes to living a smoke-free life, because lung cancer is the leading cause, as I said, of cancer death in Canada. It is estimated that smoking is related to more than 85% of lung cancer cases in Ontario.

"Smokers are about 20 times more likely to develop lung cancer than non-smokers. The longer a person smokes and the more cigarettes smoked each day, the more the risk increases. Smokers are also at a higher risk if they're exposed to radon or certain chemicals in their home or workplace and" yet, over and above that, "continue to smoke.

"Most forms of lung cancer develop gradually and do not produce any symptoms until," unfortunately, "the disease is advanced. This makes it hard to find lung cancer early enough for a cure.

"Each year, more than 250 Canadians die from lung cancer as a result of long-term exposure to the tobacco smoked by other people"—I'm talking about second-hand smoke here—"at home, at work and when they're out and about."

"Cigarette smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals and poisons, including more than 70 that are known to cause cancer. Some of the poisons and chemicals in cigarette smoke are:

—"carbon monoxide (found in your car's exhaust);

—"ammonia (found in window cleaners);

—"cadmium (found in batteries);

—"arsenic (found in rat poison)," just to name a few.

"When you smoke, many of these chemicals mix together and form a sticky tar. That tar sticks to tiny hairs that line the inside of your lungs—hairs that are supposed to keep your lungs clean by sweeping out the dirt and germs. But when they're covered in tar, they can't do their job properly. This is what leads to smoker's cough to spit up the dirt that's still in your lungs. It also leads to many other health problems."

Then we all know about nicotine. "Nicotine is what makes smoking cigarettes so addictive. This drug makes your body crave more cigarettes and that means inhaling all those chemicals" as a result.

That's why I think Bill 131 is important to consider. If we get it into second reading, I will be interested in the process that we all know happens in second reading and to the deputants who come in to be heard. As I mentioned before, it's a bit alarming when you hear of a government touting to be transparent and willing to work with people, and then you listen to stakeholders and meet with stakeholders and hear the absolute opposite: that this government hasn't consulted with them. A flag goes up.

It's important that we address this issue because the overall rate of smoking in Ontario has remained flatlined at 19% for the past five years. To some of you, 19% may be a good number, but the key to that statement is that it has remained flatlined. The province took action in 2006 with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and we know that more can be done to reduce the prevalence of smoking in the province. We can look at other jurisdictions that have demonstrated success in reducing smoking. For example, British Columbia has decreased their smoking rate from over 18% in 2008 to 14% in 2012. I think that's a benchmark that we should strive for here in Ontario.

I just want to revisit what this bill is really all about. This bill contains six main changes, with the goal of decreasing the incidence of youth smoking in Ontario. I will go over each of these six changes and discuss the merits and potential challenges or unintended consequences, if indeed any do exist. The six aspects of this bill are prohibiting sales of tobacco products containing flavouring, prohibiting sales on post-secondary campuses and specified government properties, banning smoking on restaurant and bar patios, increased fines for those who sell tobacco products, prohibiting the sale of promotional items with tobacco products, and increasing the scope of inspection.

Essentially, the inspectors have their range of authority enlarged whereby they can seize improperly packaged products and can go into water pipe cafes and levy higher fines. The one thing that I find interesting is "can seize improperly packaged products." Well, if that's a hint that this government might just get serious about contraband, I encourage them to do so much more.

The smoke shops that we have throughout this province and, again, the number of butts that we find outside hospitals and in schoolyards that are not brand-oriented, but indeed contraband, are increasing at an alarming rate. I think about this, and it's frustrating, because here we are trying to encourage people to live healthy in a smoke-free Ontario, but all the while Ontario is becoming more and more expensive to live in under this Liberal government. As a result, people have fewer dollars to stretch, and because they have fewer dollars to stretch—herein lies the irony, Speaker—you're going to turn them to the underground. We all know from our colleague from Simcoe North that the College of Trades and all the regulations that are being introduced there are going to be driving our handymen underground. Unfortunately, if we don't do this right, in terms of Bill 131, we will not only drive smokers underground as well—to the smoke shops and the rollies that public health officials are finding, as I

said, outside hospitals and in the schoolyards, which is absolutely horrible.

There needs to be bold action taken. There needs to be some very decisive attention. We encourage the Liberals to just not stop at seizing improperly packaged products. We encourage the Liberal government of Ontario to stand up and do the right thing to address contraband in the manner in which it should be.

Let's talk about that first point: prohibiting sales of tobacco products containing flavouring. Tobacco Use in Canada, from the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact, has—the edition is from 2013—a quote that says, "This edition of the report provides, for the first time, data on the use of flavoured tobacco among youth. This shift from cigarettes to other forms of tobacco is a real concern...." So for goodness' sake, let's get the industry stakeholders to the table, discuss this reality and together figure out how to move forward.

If we focus specifically on flavoured tobacco, there's another study that was done in October 2013, a report that was released called the Youth Smoking Survey, which showed that 57,000 grade 6 to grade 12 Ontario youth used flavoured products in 2010-11. This report was just released. There's a concern here in terms of inspectors doing their jobs and the access points for flavoured tobacco products. We need to get, as I said, all these stakeholders together to devise a plan that everybody owns and is therefore accountable to.

Moving on to the second aspect, prohibiting sales on post-secondary campuses and specified government properties, I'm sure we all have had that experience where you go to walk into a particular institution or a particular government building and there is a trash can with a cigarette ashtray on top of it. Butts are strewn everywhere and sometimes you have to walk through the smoke. I know myself, I'm uncomfortable when that experience happens, so I welcome this particular change in Bill 131.

The regulations that would prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, sports surfaces and sports spectator areas within a 20-metre radius, except if there's a private dwelling, is an interesting aspect. This is the kind of regulation that is already in place in a number of municipalities. I would say the province is playing catch-up right now with a number of municipalities. We need to be careful here because, again, we don't want to over-regulate. We need to be mindful of regulations and bylaws that are already in place, so the province isn't tripping over municipalities and vice versa. To be clear on that, we right now have 100 municipalities in Ontario that have passed such a bylaw, and this number is increasing quickly. To pass this bill with the provision that it would ban smoking in municipal places is really to play catch-up, because a huge percentage of municipalities, as I said, are already there, so we need to be mindful we don't trip over top of each other.

1630

I think we need to take a look, that this is a trend that will increase, because just two years ago there were only

50 municipalities with that particular bylaw. You can see that just in the last few years a number of municipalities have joined the ranks where you cannot smoke in a variety of outdoor places, such as playgrounds, parks, beaches etc. I'm sure that list will continue to grow.

The third element of this particular bill specifically addresses banning smoking on restaurant and bar patios. Again, there's a huge flag here. In my role as critic for small business and red tape, I learned from the restaurant and hotel association that they were not consulted on this bill. There's a trend here, Speaker, and it goes from sector to sector, issue to issue. This government just has the mindset that they know best and they can run roughshod, if you will, over top of people. We need to do better. But essentially, banning smoking on patios will have an impact on hotel and motel organizations and businesses, as it will force smokers out of only public property, which will affect bystanders. So we need to take a look at that.

I mentioned before that people get subjected to second-hand smoke. I want to talk about that for a moment now. Second-hand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, and it is a mix of mainstream smoke exhaled by smokers and side-stream smoke emitted from the tips of burning cigarettes.

Second-hand smoke is also known as passive smoke, or environmental tobacco smoke, ETS. Most public health authorities will use the term "second-hand smoke" as opposed to "ETS," because the latter infers a relationship between tobacco smoke and the environment in general, resulting in confusion about its exact meaning. But exposure to second-hand smoke is involuntary. Involuntary exposure to second-hand smoke results from non-smokers breathing in air containing, as I said, second-hand smoke. It involves inhaling carcinogens as well as other toxic components that are present in both mainstream and side-stream smoke. Carci—carcinogens that occur in second-hand smoke include benzene, butadiene and a number—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Carcinogens.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Carcinogens. Thank you. It's getting to be a long day. Thank you. I appreciate that.

So there are a number of things that second-hand smoke contains, and we have to be mindful that it's involuntary. I don't want to walk through it, as I'm sure none of you do either.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded in its 2002 monograph on tobacco smoke and second-hand smoke that there is sufficient evidence that involuntary smoking, exposure to second-hand or environmental tobacco smoke, causes lung cancer in humans. It makes the overall evaluation that involuntary smoking, meaning exposure to second-hand or environmental tobacco smoke, is carcinogenic to humans. Did I get that right?

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

So, ladies and gentlemen, this Bill 131 needs to get into second reading, and we'll continue to do some more work on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you to the member from Huron-Bruce for her comments.

A couple of things triggered in my head. The first one was her mention of the town of Mildmay. That may not mean a lot to many people here in Ontario, but one of my favourite remembrances as a boy, a young man and even today is a picture of my father and my aunt during the 1920s. They were sent to Mildmay during the summers in Toronto because of the polio epidemics. I still have the picture. Thank you for that remembrance.

The member talked about people suffering and wanting to be at home. I don't think the issue is whether they would like to be at home or not, or the cost of electricity. The fact is that people will suffer—no matter where they end up, they will suffer—if they continue to smoke. We need to do everything we can.

She touched on the whole role of small business policing the sale of cigarettes, and she's absolutely right. I know that there are mistakes made by some small businesses, and some aren't careful enough in selling cigarettes to minors. However, the issue of contraband is the far larger issue. I know if you go into the schools and some of the places in my riding and literally every riding in this province, it is the contraband cigarettes that are being picked up by the young. They only cost a third or a quarter or even less the price. When young people who don't have as much money as maybe perhaps some others take up the habit, invariably they take up the habit with these cigarettes that you can buy in baggies. She's right to talk about that.

She's not so right, though, to talk about the patio issue and the restaurant association. I remember my time as a mayor and on the board of health in both the borough of East York and the city of Toronto. That association came to us and talked about all the money they were going to lose if we put on any kind of smoking ban inside, even to lessen the area where smoking is allowed. The reality is, none of that happened. Perhaps that's why the government is a little bit wary about going there for that advice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Before I dive into my comments, I do want to acknowledge some very important guests here this afternoon at the Legislature with us, from the Canadian Cancer Society—welcome—as well as the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. Many thanks for the work you do. Thank you.

In terms of this bill, as I think we've heard before, our government is very committed to helping Ontarians live healthy lives. We know that the best way to fight illness and disease is to prevent it in the first place. We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults. A healthy start is better for our kids and our health care system. That's why the first pillar of our action plan for health care is all about that.

We've set very ambitious goals for having the lowest smoking rate in Canada. While we've taken aggressive

action to protect Ontarians, especially young Ontarians, from the harmful effects of tobacco and smoke, we know there is more to do. So that's why we introduced this bill. Together, this bill and the regulatory amendments will help prevent young Ontarians from taking up smoking and protect them from the hazardous exposure to second-hand smoke. A lot of us grew up with it, but when we think back to that time in our lives, we wouldn't wish that for our children or grandchildren.

We also announced last fall our consultation on legislation that would require large chain restaurants to include calories and other information on menus. These kinds of initiatives together are intended to help protect our children. I think we can agree that it's a good thing to do, and we look forward to receiving support from all parties in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I wanted to commend the member from Huron-Bruce for filling 20 minutes with informative information and supportive comments with respect to the importance of this bill and the role that we have here of talking to the issue and, at the same time, educating people about the dangers of smoking. I thought she added a lot of value with some of the history to it. I perhaps will have a chance later this afternoon to speak myself. I hope I do, because the members that spoke today, I believe, on our side—I can say with some confidence that we're certainly supportive of somehow dealing with the problems associated with respiratory illness which is absolutely related, no question, to smoking.

I think of some of the information on the chemicals and the other compounds, but I think the part that touched me most was the contraband issue and the studies that had been done. Also at the same time, I think she's quick to recognize the work that has been done by the critic for health for the NDP, France Gélinas. I think she has done a marvellous job on this file, perhaps in excess of the work done by the government itself. She has almost coaxed them into doing this bill. It should always be recognized that there's good work done on all sides of the House here. This issue affects health care in Ontario.

I think our member from Huron-Bruce added great value to the debate and to the understanding of the hazards of smoking, especially with our young people. So I commend her for her remarks and look forward to her summation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand and speak on Bill 131 on behalf of my constituents, and to follow the comments made by the member from Huron-Bruce, in particular. It sounds like people around the House are going to support this piece of legislation. I think it's a good piece of legislation. I think it's sensible. It speaks to the power of government and what we can establish together.

The culture, when it comes to smoking, has changed dramatically in my lifetime. Growing up, you could smoke just about everywhere, and I think that has changed people's perspective. I was recently at a family gathering, and some of the adults left and walked far, far away from the children at that gathering—they left the porch; they left plain view—to smoke a cigarette, whereas back in the day you could smoke in a movie theatre, you could smoke in a hospital room or in an airplane. These things matter.

I want to thank the member from Durham for recognizing the good work that our health critic has done on this particular file. France Gélinas has been a champion of this issue, and I think it's a good perspective that she holds when it comes to taking the preventive measures that are going to improve people's health and reduce health care costs. This is absolutely a no-brainer in this sense.

I'm optimistic that this will go forward, that we can move this forward, that we can protect people from becoming addicted to nicotine, that we can take some power back from big tobacco companies and save all of us those terrible impacts of tobacco addiction and the health costs that go with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron-Bruce has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly appreciate the comments we've heard around the House this afternoon.

To the member from Beaches-East York: Mildmay is the gateway to the Bruce, so I'm glad it conjured up some good memories for you. If you ever have a chance to go there, knowing you're such a connoisseur, there's a fine cheese haus—spelled H-A-U-S—on the main street. I encourage you to visit that.

I also appreciate how you recognize that contraband is an issue that really needs to be addressed. Hopefully, to your colleague from Davenport's point, we can work together to continue on this quest.

To the Minister of Consumer Services: Yes, we need to be very committed in doing the right thing here. Prevention is a very ambitious goal, but I really believe it is the direction we have to go. I really want to encourage that we all take time to engage our stakeholders so that we understand the impacts our discussions may impose upon them. As a result, our go-forward plans will be that much stronger.

To my colleague from Durham, I'm going to take a moment, while I have a couple of seconds, to wish him the very best whenever his retirement may be upon him, because he's one of my favourites. We've learned a lot from John—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: He's one of our favourites, too.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: There you go. We've learned from the member from Durham. You speak from your heart, and when you speak from your heart and you know your topic, you should be able to stand up without any notes and speak with conviction. He is always prepared, as well, and I recognize that. As the member

from Davenport pointed out, I really appreciate how he is fair and recognized the good work, not only of the member from Nickel Belt, but of everyone.

I hope our lung action plan can serve the purpose of working together, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before we move on, now that we're all in a good mood and we're throwing around compliments, a friendly reminder to some of the members, and I won't point them out: They have been coming in and out and not acknowledging the Chair, some of them are walking across in front of the Chair and not acknowledging—just a friendly reminder that we don't appreciate that.

Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to be called to duty here, if you will. It's call to duty, isn't it? Isn't that one of those video games today? Anyway, as has been mentioned, it's been my privilege to be here for almost 20 years.

The context of Bill 131—I think it's important to put a little bit of context around it—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I expect you will be bowing when you're leaving this place.

Interjection: Genuflect.

Mr. John O'Toole: Genuflect.

Anyway, because of the length of service here and the fact that I did work for 31 years at General Motors, I qualify as being a senior, for sure, maybe a bit beyond that. I think an important perspective is that when I was a child—I can tell you; this is a fact—my mother didn't smoke, as I recall, but I'm sure I was a breastfed child. My oldest sister told me that when she was in maternity, they used to teach you how to breastfeed and smoke. That's a fact. This goes back many years. She's a retired teacher. She was telling me, some months ago, this story about how they used to teach them how to avoid ashes falling on the child's face.

I remember flying to Ireland when I was probably 10 years old, I guess, and people were smoking on the plane. It was quite natural. Even today, in planes, they say if you're caught smoking in the washroom—they have smoke detectors, and they can really give you a hard time.

We've come a long way, I guess, through education. The theme of this discussion today is really—the primary role here is to educate people. I know there's Butt Out and smoke signs and lots of efforts. I want to commend and recognize Heart and Stroke who are here today, and the work that they do, and of course, Cancer Care Ontario and the cancer society, which really carries this forward.

Having lobbying days here at Queen's Park, or education days, I'd call them—Heart and Stroke and others have held these days, particularly pressuring the government to bring forward legislation to address some of the newer forms of smoking, and those are the new brands that are enticing young people into it by marketing and other gimmicky that goes on.

Again, I say it quite clearly: The member from Nickel Belt really has done more—there's no question about that—of pushing relentlessly. She had a private member's bill or two on it, especially with the cigarillos and whatever they call some of these new products. Some of them are different colours. It's all marketing to young people. I think it's important to get ahead of this thing, and this bill does some of that.

The bill itself, for the general viewer today, is quite a small bill in terms of its length, but the content is quite technical, too. It's actually two pages in English and two pages in French. It's got five particular sections, and the assorted amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act are as follows:

“(1) The sale of promotional items together with tobacco products is prohibited.

“(2) The sale of flavoured tobacco products is prohibited, subject to a power to prescribe exemptions.

“(3) The list of places that an inspector is specifically empowered to enter is broadened”—in fact, it's warrantless entry, which was questioned by one of the previous speakers. The list of places that an inspector can enter, as I said, is maybe the question that—some hearing and clarification.

I always dislike the amount of regulation within legislation, because you're really not sure: Are there adequate resources for enforcement or dispute resolutions—often get ignored because we think we're going to handle all the stuff in regulations and don't.

“(4) Adjustments are made to the penalty provisions.” That would be the new government tax, whatever that is. “Penalty” is a substitute word for “tax” or “fine.”

“(5) The power to prescribe places for the purposes of the act is amended to provide for exemptions.”

That's been the most controversial. In my constituency office in Bowmanville, about three stores down in sort of a—not a strip mall; it's downtown. But there's a little plaza, and in the little plaza there's a tavern type of thing, and across the street there's another little tavern thing. In the last few years, they've invested quite heavily in having an outside patio with a roof so that people can smoke.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if you were a smoker at one time or not, but I was. I quit probably about 10 years ago, I guess, because here it's just not acceptable to smoke. Maybe it's more than 10 years, I suppose. I have been known to break that rule the odd time.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Don't inhale.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't inhale, for sure—and it's 10 years. I only say lightheartedly that nobody is perfect here.

1650

These small business people have built the patios, and I suspect they've got to be clearer on these rules and the enforcement, which is left to the police—often not essential to who is enforcing it and how. So that's got to be clearer.

Then you get straight into the whole reasonable and probable grounds argument for search and seizure of

product. There are sections covered in this bill that deal with, under section 6, "An inspector acting under section 14 may seize" certain things, and it describes that in some detail. There's another table here sort of repealed, and the substitutes are inserted in the provisions. I think for the viewer it might be easier to just show it. There are two or three tables in here—in two languages, so there are really two tables in here. One is dealing with the fines and the other is dealing with individual and corporate fines. They're pretty extraordinary fines here, really. They go up to \$600,000, and so I hope that's not at the individual—that's the corporation side of the business. But we know in the courts, they've taken these companies to task, and they still find ways of circumventing the law. That's quite important to realize.

Now, what is the outcome on the health care system of Ontario? The health care system represents about 43% or 45% of the total budget, and it's budget day tomorrow. We'll find out—I'm not sure, but I can tell you this: They say that they have this expenditure reduction plan and they say that they are going to have a balanced budget by 2017-18. I'm guessing a bit, but this does tie back to Bill 131. I have absolutely no trust in the government, and I hate to say that, after being here almost 20 years. They would say anything to save their soul. Unfortunately, in the context here, this bill may not see the light of day. The reason I say that is, I can remember a couple of years ago where they prorogued the House and lots of the bills just fell away.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Talk about this one.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. This bill here is important, and we need to get on with it, but it's this government that has the keys to the vault and they have the keys to the changes that need to occur in Ontario. It's up to them to schedule the discussions, schedule the committees. But I'm suspicious that we should find out next week sometime, they may pull the plug and let the water out of the bathtub here and leave all the fish exposed. Do you understand? If they do that, it's called an election, Mr. Speaker—you know that. I'm not forecasting anything, but what does it do to these bills? They have mismanaged the legislative calendar, and it started two years ago under Premier McGuinity. In that forum, when he prorogued the House, these bills ended up being—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I believe the standing orders have requirements to have the speaker speak to the bill at hand. I'm just gently reminding—I wouldn't remind you, Speaker, because you know the rules—but I just wanted to identify—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I'll assure the minister that I'm keeping close watch on where the member is floating, and if he floats too far, we'll deal with it.

Continue.

Mr. John O'Toole: Reasonable and probable grounds should come into play here—I was trying to tie it back to

the budget and how important health care is. It's 43% of the budget.

Now, here is what I'm hearing in my riding: This bill, on respirology—let's stick with the one thing. Okay? It's tied to this bill. What are some of the ailments? We have a doctor here, and a couple—no, one doctor. He should be a cabinet minister, actually. I'm surprised he got missed in the last round. But anyway, we'll stick to the topic here. Respirology: The popular diseases that you hear about are emphysema and COPD, which is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; the more recent one is IPF, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Now, I have constituents, and this is related—to some extent, these chronic respiratory issues are directly or indirectly related to smoking or the environment.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Not IPF.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, not IPF? Well, that's good, doctor; thank you for that early diagnosis there. That's important.

I say it and I genuinely mean what I say. I remember, I think it was Brett Hull, the hockey player who had COPD. He was one of the people who spoke here today. That's important: the educating of our young. Looking at the sports leaders today, very few of them smoke, that I recall. Ten or 15 years ago, they all smoked, basically. It was terrible. Those were models for young people. So some actions on that side are important.

When I brought up these diseases—IPF is one. It's respiratory, not related to smoking. There's a drug. If you don't get a lung transplant within a certain time, you simply cannot breathe, and you suffocate and die. It's a terrible, terrible affliction. But there is a drug that's offering hope and optimism: Esbriet. Now, they don't fund it. I've had one constituent decease, and another one whose wonderful daughter, on behalf of her mother, is advocating for the funding of Esbriet, and it comes up here regularly in the Legislature. It does tie to our budget.

I do say that lots of these addictive substances, with the changing market—now, here's the contrary part of this whole thing. To me, the debate going on at the federal and other levels is talking about decriminalization of marijuana. If you look back far enough, George Washington didn't know whether to grow hemp or tobacco. If you look back in American history, they didn't know which product, because they both offered some kind of stimulus, and there was quite a debate. Hemp became the product—they made ropes for sailing and all that kind of stuff out of hemp, because it's such a strong material. But that's a fact: They ended up with tobacco.

Now, how does this relate? Well, it relates to the contraband issue, because under constitutional documents that I've read, indigenous or First Nations people, I believe, were able to trade in fish, fur and tobacco, I think it is. When you look at the First Nations today and the issue of contraband cigarettes, they have the ability to trade. So we end up with the government having the tax as high as you could possibly get. There are a few members here who smoke. I won't name them, because it

would be embarrassing—to me, because they'd probably be mad at me forever. I think it's about \$10 a pack—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Twelve.

Mr. John O'Toole: Twelve dollars a pack. It's unbelievable. So I would say we're getting close, on the tobacco side, when the First Nations on the reserves—I guess they're selling them for \$10 or \$15 for a bag of 200, which is like a carton, I guess. No wonder the surveys that have been done by the groups find that about 90% of the butts around these allocated smoking areas in schools, if there's such a thing—I think you can't even smoke on the sidewalk anymore; it's public space. You can't smoke in parks—nor should you, by the way. I should be clear and not ambiguous about it.

Then people ask me, “Why don't they enforce this contraband?” Well, you've got the constitutional issues. Now, the federal government could be dealing with this, the RCMP; it's First Nations. Really, a lot of their legislative, under the Indian Act—it's sort of in there. Provincially, if it's off-reserve, I think they could stop you and say, “Those are contraband cigarettes. There are no labels on them,” and they could fine you.

This bill, I think, sets up a regime of fines or what they call penalties. I call it taxes, because everything now—the licence for your car, fees, permits, licences, all of it—they double. It's just tax. The Drive Clean program is a perfect example. I'm a little off-topic, but the Drive Clean is one example. It's a tax grab.

It comes down to fairness, at the end of the day. Somebody said earlier, and I think it's a very profound way of summarizing this, that doing the right thing is the right policy. In fact, doing the right thing is the right politics. Doing the wrong thing is the wrong politics, and we saw that in the gas plants. We saw it in Ornge helicopter. We see it—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, it's all related. It all ties back to Bill 131. It ties back in the respect that this bill could be the subject of an oversight when they call the election.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Any more YouTubes?

Mr. John O'Toole: No. People are starting to chirp in here, and maybe it's not even appropriate.

1700

People ask me this question: “If it's that bad, why are you selling it?” Why are they selling it? It's about the money. Do you understand? It's about the money. If we know categorically that it kills people, why isn't it completely illegal?

What are some of the anti-smoking medicines that you can take?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Champix.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nicorette.

Mr. John O'Toole: Champix and all this kind of stuff—and they don't even fund some of that. Smoking cessation programs have been cut back.

There's a many-pronged approach that's necessary for this, working with Heart and Stroke and the cancer society, who have done this, working with members on

all sides. Our critic Christine Elliott has done a great job. France Gélinas has done a great job. We want to get this done. I want you to put your money where your goals are. I say that because the budget is coming up. Secretly, I have a hope that this bill will pass before the election.

In the two minutes that the other side has—there are a couple of ministers here; four ministers, actually, which is pretty good for a Wednesday afternoon, because all the other members are somewhere else. Here's the deal. What I want is them to stand and tell me when the election is going to be. The only fair thing to do is to be honest here, to get up, stand on your feet and say, “Look, we're going to call this budget.” Then I want the NDP to say—are you going to sit on your hands again, or are you going to vote?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We seem to have drifted, so I'm suggesting you might want to go back to the bill. Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: God, I was on a roll there. But it troubles me to think that this bill is so short and I have so much time to fill. I had to stray off every once in a while.

I do mean this quite sincerely. Let's be honest with one another here. There's a budget tomorrow. I want to know if the NDP are going to stand and vote for it. Is the government going to just drop the gloves, walk down the hall and see the LG? Because I'm concerned that my constituents need this bill passed. Bill 131 talks to public health, the volunteers in our community. What we're trying to do today is to make a focused effort here, right directly to Premier Wynne, and say, “Are you going to do the right thing? Are you going to put this into law, or are you going to call an election to save your own seat?” That really boils this whole thing down into that one decision. The Premier has the power to call an election. The Premier has the power—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Everybody wants the election.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm not running again. I'm being honest. The Minister of the Environment is the longest-serving member here, and I'm wondering if he's going to run again. I'm asking him in the two-minute response to make that announcement, because I'm worried. He has been here so long that he's starting to repeat himself, because he has been the Minister of the Environment twice.

Interjections.

Interjection: Withdraw, withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw. I meant that as a compliment, to be honest. He was the Minister of the Environment back in the David Peterson government. Now he's back in the—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, that's easy. Okay.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, that's what I meant. I introduced him to one of my friends yesterday. He was pleased to meet him, because I think he was an engineer and worked for the ministry at one time. Then he got rid of all the engineers in the Ministry of the Environment when he was the minister.

Anyway, on this bill here, I suspect that in the two-minute hits, people will be complimentary of the remarks

I've made and the effort—I've tried to educate the public on a bill that should become law. It's the right thing to do. That's the right policy.

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a pleasure to rise today to comment on the speech made by the member from Durham. I have had the privilege of being in this House for nearly 13 years and have watched him, sometimes in great awe, as he stands up and orates on so many topics. Sometimes it's a never-ending stream of thought, and sometimes it's very well informed. Sometimes it's humorous; sometimes it's deadly serious, but he always speaks his mind. I want to be able to say this knowing full well, and following on the theme of what he had to say, that this House may or may not be winding down. I wanted to make sure that I got this in.

I remember back to my very young days, too. Women who were taught how to breastfeed in a hospital were also shown how to smoke a cigarette at the same time without dropping the ash on babies.

I do remember quite clearly in my youth many women with young babies—during their pregnancy, postpartum and while the child was growing up—smoking in their presence. It was absolutely common, and today we look aghast when we see anything like that at all.

I wanted to thank him for his generosity and praise, not only for his own colleagues, but sometimes for the government and for the third party. He mentioned particularly Madame Gélinas.

He did talk—and I need to close on this—about contraband cigarettes, and he is absolutely correct. People forget, from time to time, that the First Nations were only allowed to trade in several things; one of them was tobacco. He is absolutely right that this is something that is part of a culture of people who were held down, people who were not allowed to do a great many economic activities in this country; one of them was trading in cigarettes. We need to get ourselves around that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 131 today. You know, it was a government I was with—it was the municipal government—that got smoking out of restaurants and public places in Ottawa, and it was this government that moved smoking out of cars with children. We moved cigarette advertising—the power walls—out of retail, that advertising that was out there to try to convince children to smoke. That was Fonseca, Wilkinson and myself. We were able to pass that motion and get that McNeely amendment in there.

We stopped the cosmetic use of pesticides, which is health-related, much like this bill. We got Ontario out of coal—probably the biggest thing, and so important to the future of this planet. We set the standard for all countries etc.

This bill further supports the health of children. That's important. That's part of those packages. Remember the

days of Dr. Cushman? I think he and Bob Chiarelli were both armed—not armed, but they had protection—when we were passing those no-smoking bills in the city of Ottawa. We didn't arm any of our politicians or the medical officer of health. Sorry about that.

So let's support the bill. There seems to be great support from the member across. I think he's speaking for his party when they say they'd like this bill passed. This would be great to get it moving forward very quickly—the member for Durham.

It's doing the right thing. As the member said, doing the right thing is good public policy. This is good public policy. It's a long list of accomplishments since 2003 to make for a healthier province. Let's continue and get this passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I always listen with great anticipation when the member from Durham gets up to speak. He has been here a long time. We're going to miss him. I would certainly hope that I could call his house when he's not here anymore for advice and whatever.

Mr. Michael Harris: Call the golf course.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Call the golf course. We'll find him there.

Anyway, I listened not only to the member from Durham, but also across the floor. I heard several times, "Let's get this bill going," "Let's get it done," "Let's get it to committee," and everything else. We know what happens when it gets there. Too many bills have been held up in committees, and they're never called back to the House, even though—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: The government controls that.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The government blames everybody else for not getting these things done. I think that if they are genuinely concerned about something that is as important as a bill such as this—and I believe that it is an important bill—don't look across here and accuse us of holding things up, because we know how things work around here. It's the government's duty to get these things in and through committee.

As I said previously—and the member from Durham also brought this up—I am still a little concerned about the powers of search and seizure here and warrants, if there is a warrant that needs to be taken out. I think that we need to have properly trained people who are charged with enforcing this type of bylaw and have the proper things in place, not only for the protection of the business owners that this may affect, with the patios outside their restaurants, but also for the safety of the people involved who are trying to enforce this thing. They must have clear parameters that they have to enforce and deal with. Again, I'd like to state: I think that needs to be strengthened for this bill. Hopefully that will happen in committee.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham has two minutes.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One more? The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I wouldn't want to miss an opportunity to comment on some of the statements that the member from Durham has made, because this could potentially—who knows what's going to happen? This could be one of his last days here in the Legislature, and I know it's a sad day. He and I have agreed on almost nothing over the last few years, but I do honestly respect the fact that he has dedicated so many years to this place and public service. He's never shy about patting himself on the back, and that's a good sign.

I just want to focus, though, on one element of this legislation, Bill 131. There is room for improvement on prevention in health care. We spend only 1% of the entire health care budget on prevention. As I said in my previous comments, the best and smartest investment around smoking is to prevent people from becoming addicted—because they are highly addictive.

We definitely need to get this piece of legislation to committee. There have been some good suggestions about making it stronger. There is a backlog, though, at committee, as has already been stated, which is very unfortunate. In a minority government, we should be able to move these things through fairly quickly. This should be, I think, a priority. I know that the member from Nickel Belt has brought forward similar legislation, year after year after year, through private member's bills. It has received support from members on all sides. On an issue like this, this should be a genuinely non-partisan issue.

There is a need to accelerate it and we will be supporting it. I hope that there aren't any future speakers on this piece today. Let's collapse the debate, and let's get it to committee, and let's get something done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham has two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank all those who complimented my length of time here. I genuinely mean that and I'm actually sorry to leave, in a lot of ways. There's a lot of young talent, certainly in our caucus, and I think it's time for them. If I was here, I'd want to be talking on every bill. I need to move aside and let them have more time to comment on behalf of their constituents.

Just on the compliments from the member from Beaches–East York—I've served on committees with him for some time. He said that the House might be winding down. I think you're very insightful. You have a great history of calling the shots when you were mayor and certainly as finance critic as well. Your colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo is now the finance critic, I get, because she speaks on it all the time. Actually, I have great respect for some of the things she says—not all; I want to make that very clear, too.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans forgets that they really didn't close down the coal plants until a couple of weeks ago, actually. They were closed down because the economy was shut down and coal plants were used as

peaking plants. The only one that was closed down, and they made this promise—they promised in the 2003 election to close it in 2007. In the next election, they promised it in 2011. They finally did it out of embarrassment, under pressure from other parties. The only one who closed it down was Elizabeth Witmer. The only one that was down was the Lakeview plant. I think it's important. But good for him. He's retiring as well. He's a fine gentleman as well.

The member from Perth–Wellington, I think, made the most striking point, and he said that it was about managing House business. Do you understand? They can't get anything done. Why? Because they won't give any recognition to the House leaders who want access to information. Not Ornge—we have to FOI everything. Then they dump a whole truckload of paper on your desk; half of it is redacted. I'll tell you this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

CHILD CARE

MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 4, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Education Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 143, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi sur l'éducation et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? I believe the government had the floor.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, then.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair today, so good afternoon.

I'm happy to speak to Bill 143 today, the Child Care Modernization Act. I was hoping to have some more remarks on the previous bill, but I will move to Bill 143.

There are many factors that parents take into consideration when choosing a daycare to enrol their child in. These are all responsibilities of the parent when making this important decision, and what separates the

competition between daycare businesses in Ontario. I'll go over some of the factors that are included.

We want the ability for the child to integrate with their peers. Are they receiving proper care? Are the health and safety requirements up to standard? What is the affordability? That's an important aspect. How accessible is it? And what is the child's ability to grow and learn at this daycare?

I'll talk briefly about integration with their peers first. In choosing a daycare, in fact, for my young son Murphy, who, by the way, is at the J.W. Gerth YMCA—he may be picked up already by now, but I know he enjoyed his day there today in Kitchener. Of course, Valerie, Saida, Sarah and Linda all look after Murphy day in, day out. He's at the school where his older brother is, and I know he enjoys it. He loves the people there. He especially loves the water table. He just loves the water table every day, so we'll probably get one of those in the summer-time. Anyway, that's the YMCA at J.W. Gerth.

It was a tough decision for us on where to put Murphy. Of course, he had to attend a home daycare from the age of 12 months, when Sarah went back to work. Up until around 16 months, Pauline took care of him in a home daycare. He loved being there, of course, as well, but I know he does really enjoy the YMCA. His brother Lincoln will be following him in the coming months, as I know Sarah will want to get back to work. She's missing her peers, and, of course, her paycheque. It was a tough decision when we were debating on what we were up to, but we finally settled on the YMCA, of course, and he loves it there.

The other option, obviously, was to bring him to a smaller, in-home daycare in a neighbourhood with a family or friend. Some parents obviously feel way more comfortable bringing their child to a daycare in a private home—it may be a neighbour; it may be a relative or a friend—while others prefer bringing their children to—whether it be a local church group or a Montessori, and I know I'm going to get chatting about that later, or the YMCA. The ability for parents to have this choice is very, very important in the way that they decide to raise their child. This proposed legislation is pushing for licensing, which could affect whether some of these well-operated daycare services can continue to operate.

Secondly, parents want to make sure that their child is safe. I know, for me, I rest assured knowing that, each and every day that Murphy goes to the YMCA, he's at the school; there's controlled access into the building; there's a fence around it—that was, by far, one of the most important factors for me when I was choosing a daycare for Murphy, knowing that he won't be able to get out on the street, with cars coming by, maybe a fence unlocked in the back of a home etc. That is one thing that I know when I'm here—that Murphy is safe, and I know that's a major consideration for other parents as well when they're deciding their child caregiver.

The other factor is experience, and the education level of the caregiver—that's an important role for parents in making their decision. The space where the child eats,

sleeps and plays needs to be clean and safe. That the caregiver should be certified in first aid, of course, and CPR, and have the ability to drive to the doctor or hospital if needed, to me as a parent is important. I know there are a lot of kids at the local YMCA, at J.W. Gerth. They have a lot of medical needs, allergies, all kinds of things. They really do a great job to accommodate that.

1720

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo and I had a bit of a disagreement before she was elected as a member. She was really pushing for before- and after-school programs to be taken over by the school board but really forgot about the value that third-party providers actually provide in our schools. This is one of the examples that I did hear from those parents, talking about the accommodations that they made for their children who have special needs—unlike, perhaps, some of our schools that don't often do that.

I know the government continues to hold up my colleague Jeff Yurek's bill; I believe it's Josh's Act. A young lad there, unfortunately, succumbed because he couldn't get an EpiPen in fast enough. So we need to make those accommodations.

I'm getting us slightly off track there, but I just thought I would bring that up when we were talking about YMCAs and third-party daycare and the ability for them to really be flexible with children with all kinds of needs.

It's important that they are also able to properly manage all the children together. This is very important. As you know, Speaker, this bill was tabled around the time when some children died under the watch of a daycare provider. It's very, very sad, especially as a parent, to hear about a young child who lost their life in the care of others. This obviously was a very sensitive issue when the bill came to the House for the first time. Saying that, these were a few examples out of the thousands of facilities that operate safely, with or without a licence, in the province. As tragic as these instances are, they really shouldn't be the reason to overhaul the entire system without having the proper consultations. I think we hear far too often about the lack of consultation that comes with government bills.

It's like a knee-jerk reaction to a lot of things: the Green Energy Act. I'm looking at the minister who formerly was an energy minister. I know he will probably agree with me that more consultation up front could have happened so that we wouldn't have the problems that they are experiencing today. Anyways, these are a few examples.

I also want to get back to the statistics. They say that 80% of kids in daycare are actually being taken care of in an informal setting. Simply to say that licensed daycares are safer than non-licensed daycares really isn't a factual claim. It is the responsibility of the parent to do the appropriate research into the service they go with for the child or children, and it's their right to choose that service. It's extremely important, and I would encourage all parents who are transitioning their children out of the

home at a young age and picking their daycare provider to do the research: to go in, speak to the daycare provider, look at the facilities, look at the property and ensure that it's safe, because they have to drop their child off each and every day and know that their precious one, the most important part of their family, is with somebody else. That's so important.

I will talk about affordability; it's obviously a major factor when choosing daycare services. This could decide for many families whether mom or dad can go back to work or stay at home to take care of their young ones. The cost of daycare ranges based on the type of facility you go to, whether it is an in-home daycare, a licensed daycare at a church or a YMCA facility, a third-party daycare attached to an elementary school, or a daycare program in a private school. The ability to have this choice is fundamental to families, and this allows them, from all levels of income, to have daycare service for their children—extremely important.

In my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, there are many families that would require their child to stay in the neighbourhood, whether it's some of our rural communities in townships like Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich. There have been concerns that the costs of a provider continue to go up as the rules change, threatening closure of some of these rural daycare centres. Parents have a great concern that this would force them to drive 15 minutes or half an hour here and there, back and forth from work every morning, tacking that extra time on to their morning routine.

Accessibility is very important for families, and Bill 143 must not threaten the ability of properly run daycare centres to stay open for children in rural communities like those in my riding and across the province.

Another factor when choosing a daycare service is the ability for that child to grow and learn to that of their peers. I had the immense pleasure and opportunity—and I know my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo was just mere hours before me—to attend the Sunshine Montessori School. I should have got a picture of a New Democrat in a private Montessori school. That would have been a good one. But anyway, I know she had a good time. I know she had a good time there, as did I. That was last week. I think it was great that she went in and saw it.

This private school opened its doors over 25 years ago and now serves over 200 families within the Kitchener–Waterloo community, over 50 families in the city of Stratford that my colleague Randy Pettapiece serves, and over 25 families in the North York region, where my sister lives. I believe my niece Annie also attended. They employ over 45 teachers and staff members who provide exceptional education to more than 300 children between the ages of 18 months and 14 years.

Montessori schools have an educational approach developed by an Italian physician and educator, Maria Montessori. The concept that has been developed emphasizes child independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural physical and social develop-

ment. At Sunshine Montessori School, there are mixed-age classrooms, with classrooms for children between two and half and four years old, and ages three to five and six to nine. This style of education allows each student to invest in their interests and grow in them.

An interesting fact: Students in Sunshine Montessori Schools across the world actually grew up to be creators of Google, Amazon and Wikipedia.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Amazon.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Now you're just making words up.

Mr. Michael Harris: No, this is true.

Should Bill 143 pass as it is, parents who choose to enrol their children in this kind of school will see many changes that do not reflect the mandate of a Montessori-style school. It is because the bill lumps private schools with early learning programs into the same category as home daycare or unlicensed daycare facilities. Private schools are concerned that this will negatively impact their education system.

I can tell you from being there—I saw the children in the classroom setting learning. What a great experience to see them early on in life, learning how to spell, with an immense educational component to what they're doing, and not just play-based education, which is also important, but really a focus on the educational aspect. For this part, I had talked to parents, and they're really afraid that their choice to choose a school like Montessori would be taken away from them, because they feel also that this system would, in essence, water down the experience that their child is gaining currently at the Montessori schools.

In fact, all private schools must annually register with the province's Ministry of Education and submit to local health, fire and safety standards regularly. They currently undergo the same inspections that all schools complete. Without acknowledging the important distinctions between home daycare, unlicensed daycare facilities and early learning programs in private schools, this bill will drastically affect how all of these child care organizations can operate. We should not put them all into the same category of child care providers.

Sunshine Montessori School feels like not enough consultation was done prior to tabling the bill and is concerned that there are too many changes that will negatively impact their students and children, as well as parents. I will tell you, I have spoken to many, many parents in my community who send their children to the Montessori school, who are really upset that this bill could potentially take, in essence, the choice that they made to send their child to the Montessori school because of the factors, the quality of education they believe their child is getting. And you know what? It provides good competition for our public system when we have these other offerings available.

Some other problems that I hear from my constituents who are parents of children in daycare is that the new ratio of no more than two children under the age of two allowed in a facility, or that only five children under the age of four is the maximum, will make it tough for

parents to find affordable daycare close to home. That's the important part.

1730

I have heard from many in-house daycare providers that this bill will require them to raise costs and restrict children from enrolling in their daycare. The government argues that this will create 6,000 more spaces for children, but in reality, the proposed legislation only allows for one more child to be under the care of a caretaker in a licensed home, if they are between the ages of five and six.

Currently, almost 80% of child care is unlicensed, as I mentioned earlier, so this bill will affect the majority of parents in Ontario. This means that a large number of families may lose daycare services as a result of the proposed legislation. I have received many emails about Bill 143, and I felt that it's important to share those concerns of my constituents.

In fact, I talked to Katie from Baden, who wrote me and said that she is the mother of an 18-month-old and just had another child in February. Her son currently attends a home daycare with a maximum of four children a day, with her son being the youngest and the oldest being 22 months.

She says that the woman who runs the daycare is the most thoughtful, caring and loving woman. She is flexible to the parents' shift schedule, which has made it affordable for Katie to go back to work after being on maternity leave. She feeds her son homemade and mostly organic foods and plans daily crafts and song time. She ensures that the children go outside daily, and is doing everything she could ask for someone to take care of her son.

Unfortunately, though, this bill would prevent her from continuing to watch her son, which puts her in a position to find a new daycare provider, in a short amount of time, who would be as flexible, caring and considerate on the same budget—true story. Anybody who wants to see that email, I'd be happy to share it with them.

In New Hamburg, Christina is an in-home childcare and daycare provider who graduated from Conestoga College in early childhood education. She has her CPR, provides healthy meals and provides age-appropriate activities to help educate the kids. Christina and her husband renovated their entire basement to convert it to a toddler-friendly and safe environment with a separate entrance, kitchen and bathroom facilities.

The proposed two-under-two ratio, in her opinion, is too strict; many childcare providers are well-trained and experienced enough to properly take care of more than two toddlers. She says that it is the responsibility of the childcare provider to decide whether they feel comfortable with the number of children they look after.

She went to school for this, and that is why she has so many families contacting her to take care of their children. According to Christina—and she makes a valid point—parents should also be responsible for choosing their daycare providers. If they feel satisfied with the

facility that Christina is running, it is her right to operate this business.

She makes another good point: that children around the same age do very well together when participating in activities. Having the kids all around the same age allows them to get into a routine and play safely, rather than having large gaps in age where interests will vary.

Since many licensed daycare facilities don't even offer services for children less than 18 months—I did talk about that; we're obviously going through that with Lincoln. He'll be one year in December, and we're already planning where he'll go after that, but there's that gap before the YMCA or another provider will take them, at 16 months at the earliest. That four-month span is a difficult time. Clearly Murphy is at the YMCA, but they don't take them before 16 months, so we'll have multiple providers. There are a lot of families who, obviously, would like one. As I had said, since many licensed daycare facilities don't offer these services, the proposed change would limit the amount of daycare providers available for those under one and a half years.

I've heard from several parents that this would prevent them from going back to work sooner, since they would have troubles finding a daycare that is conveniently located, has spots open and is something that their family can afford. On top of that, restricting the number of children under two would greatly affect daycare providers' hourly pay, making it impossible to run a business. The fewer children they have, the smaller the budget they will have to provide healthy food, materials for activities etc.

Christina says that these changes will put her business at risk, and she may even have to close her doors and find work elsewhere. This concerns Christina because there is already a surplus of teachers in the job market today.

Like Christina, daycare providers—whether they are licensed or not—have to be competitive and operate like a business. They must provide the best care, at the most affordable price to parents, while ensuring that they are receiving good pay and operating their business safely. All of these factors are important when a parent chooses where to bring their child, like I mentioned before.

Stories like Katie's and Christina's ripple across my riding and all over the province. They are not alone with the concerns on this bill. Like I said, 80% of daycare services are informal and not licensed. This is far too many families who risk not being able to afford the alternative that is being pushed by these legislative changes.

I know I've got 20 seconds left. I'll conclude in my two-minute hit. I know my colleagues will want to have a say to this.

Interjection: I know one for sure.

Mr. Michael Harris: I encourage her to share her experience at the Montessori school that I participated in. I wanted to thank them for providing the important service they are in my community. I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments? The minister—the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is so very clear that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga is so far out to lunch on the child care file. It is very typical, though, of the PC caucus. They are following well in the footsteps of the Stephen Harper federal government, which brought choice in child care, \$100 a month. He has clearly fallen into step with that, this \$100-a-month choice in child care, if you have a choice, which 80% of the parents in this province do not have. I think that this business model, this language that the PC caucus uses around children—it's almost like they want a Walmart version of child care where the lowest price is the law.

I'm going to tell you why we need licensing of child care centres. There are five very good reasons. On July 28, 2010, two-year-old Jeremy Audet drowned at an unlicensed daycare. In January 2011, 14-month-old Duy-An Nguyen died in an unlicensed Mississauga child care. In 2013, on July 4, Allison Tucker, age two, was found dead in an unlicensed child care centre. In July 2013, Eva Ravikovich died at an unlicensed home daycare. In November 2013, a nine-month-old baby, Aspen Juliet Moore, died at an unlicensed child care facility.

This is a very important issue. For us to sort of do the partisan thing about who's visiting a Montessori—I had a great tour at Montessori. I loved the people there. I understand and have taken the time to learn about what impact this piece of legislation will have on their school. I will do something about it when it gets to committee. But what needs to happen in this province is that we need to keep children safe when they need child care. We need to give parents options for child care. That's where our focus should be in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, you know, I say to my kids every day, "Today is a new day." Today is a new day, because yesterday I was in strong opposition with something the minister—sorry, I'm calling you the minister—the member from Kitchener–Waterloo was debating, but today I couldn't agree more with her. I couldn't agree more with what she just said about the Child Care Modernization Act.

Like her, I have many Montessori schools in my riding as well. I'm meeting with them. I'm listening to them. I'm touring their facilities. When this gets to committee, I'm sure we'll hear from them again, and that will be a constructive thing.

But the important thing is to really get back, I think, to what this bill is all about. It's about strengthening the oversight of the unlicensed child care sector while increasing access to licensed child care options for families. It would put an immediate shutdown of a child care provider when a child's safety is at risk. It would also clarify what programs and activities are exempt from licensing requirements, including care provided by relatives, babysitters, nannies, camps and so on for school-

aged children. It would require all private schools that care for more than five children under the age of four to be licensed. That's a good thing.

As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo said, we're in second reading debate here. Let's continue the debate, and then let's get it to committee. Then we can hear from the stakeholders. We can tweak it. But let's not lose sight of what this bill is all about. It's about child safety. It's about increasing access to child care options and providing stronger oversight—all good things.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen carefully and respectfully to my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga. I should say that he brings a very genuine context to this debate on Bill 143. He and his wife Sarah have three children: little Murphy and Lincoln and Brayden. He speaks with knowledge and information in terms of the options that are prohibitive.

We all recognize the issue—I've heard it in my riding—of the Montessori schools. But this government thinks that one size fits all, and that's what is the most troubling of all the things they do. Whether it's for northern Ontario or Toronto, they operate as if everybody lives in Toronto. It's unfortunate. They honestly don't realize that options for parent choice are very important. To presume that everyone—we had five children. My wife was a teacher and we had mixed uses of family members and others—I won't say any more than that, except to say that 80% of children's care provided in Ontario is unlicensed daycare. To suggest for one moment that they're all somehow abusive situations is simply wrong.

It's the attitude of this government that they're going to fix it—most of the stuff that they've set up to organize is where the problems are. I don't care what institutions we're talking about in Ontario today—long-term care, all the way through the list—there are risks to people. I think this bill presumes that unless it's run by the government, it isn't safe for your children.

You look at the children's aid societies recently as an example of governments trying to say that they can do all things. I think this bill definitely should go to committee. It's a huge issue. I think it's a political football, too. In this respect, I really feel that going to committee and hearing the real people tell their stories—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: How did they do that early learning program? All degree teachers with a master's degree, babysitting kids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to grab, for a second, and actually look at this bill. It's quite extensive. There are quite a few pages to go through in this bill. When you talk about our children, that's something that is really key, and it's something that is very important.

The bill, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to

amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Education Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts—it sounds important, and we've got to deal with it. And it is important. But this is where my problem is: It was presented on December 3, 2013. I was here—I believe it was a couple of weeks ago—when we first started having discussions on this particular piece of legislation. We should have been having this discussion a long time ago. This is something that is a priority for this province. This is something that we should be moving forward.

I want to make sure that people from Algoma-Manitoulin and people across this province know why this is going forward and why it didn't come up—because the government of the day sets the order paper for the day. This is an opportunity that they had a very long time ago to bring these issues up, not the day before we have a budget reading. We should have had this discussion a very long time ago. This should have been in committee a long time ago, and it is because of the lack of focus that this government has had on priorities for Ontarians that we're now discussing this—how convenient—a couple of days before a budget is brought before us.

This government has lacked in regard to setting true priorities for this province, and we are going to continue, as far as what we need to do. I look forward to having this in committee, but unfortunately I hope that we can get this moving forward. It's unfortunate that it has to come up a day before the budget is proposed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to thank my colleagues who chimed in on my remarks. Obviously, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—I will never doubt her commitment to children and youth. We're going to have different opinions on things in more cases than not, but I definitely want to get that out there. I give her a hard time, but it's all in good fun.

The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the member from Ajax-Pickering and, of course, the lovely comments from my colleague John O'Toole, the one-man filibuster—supposedly. Look, he serves his community properly by standing up and speaking to all issues for his constituents.

I think what we've heard today is a lot of things. To me, I would say, from the folks I've talked to, whether it be parents, informal daycare providers, private schools or third party daycare providers, there wasn't a consultation involved here. We all have concerns with Bill 143 and feel that there simply wasn't enough consultation done before it was tabled.

I'm a father. I am very supportive of ensuring that our children are in the safe hands of others. This bill, in its current form, is too stringent and does not effectively tackle the issues of safety by lumping all daycare providers into one definition. As my colleague said, they believe one size fits all, and that's simply not the case.

This will prevent children of the same age from playing and learning together. It will restrict informal

daycares from continuing the way they operate even though some have been running their business for decades. It will increase the cost of care and could prevent parents from going back to work. It will threaten rural daycares to close their doors, restricting accessibility to families. It will prevent schools like Sunshine Montessori from providing the programs they do for children under five. They are special. They are different. The government talks about helping them, as well as the third party. Well, look, stand up and be heard. Let's actually put their mouth where it really matters and let's see them recognize the importance of what they really do.

Many good comments here; I hope the government takes them in consideration, and we'll go from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and to discuss, at length and in depth, some of the connotations and the impact of Bill 143. I think that this is actually an incredibly important piece of legislation. It does provide the framework, and all of us here in this House would agree that the framework for child care needs to be updated. I think we can all agree on that. If that's the starting place for the debate, then we should be able to work this out.

The legislation has some basic principles that we can all support. Establishing a system of responsive, safe, high-quality and accessible child care and early years programs and services will support parents and families and will contribute to the healthy development of children.

The research on the child care file, on the child care sector, the evidence-based research, is profound. From Fraser Mustard to the Atkinson Foundation, the research is solid. It has indicated that learning and development that occurs during a child's early years is critical and can have a major bearing on a person's later achievements in school and in the workplace and on overall health and well-being throughout a person's lifetime.

A strong system of child care and early years programs and services increases labour market attachment by supporting the diverse working circumstances of parents. We know in the province of Ontario in 2014 that there is more precarious work, there is more part-time work. We have seen the workforce and the demographics of the workforce change drastically.

It is unfortunate, and this is something that I've never quite fully understood: why the PCs and the Conservatives in this province and in this country do not support a solid, sustainable child care system. With every dollar you invest, depending on the research, you get a \$3 investment back or a \$7 investment back. It's across all demographics and all sectors. So what a smart investment it would be for the Conservatives, for the Liberals, for all of us to come together and recognize the positive impact on the economy that a sustainable child care system would have.

It was interesting that the member from Kitchener-Conestoga raised the issue that we dealt with at the

Waterloo Region District School Board. For those of you who don't know—when I was chair of the board I sent you all letters, so you should know. I'm sure you read everything that comes into the office. But when the Liberal government brought in the full-day kindergarten model, they left some key planning structures out. But they also called on school boards at the time to extend the school day before and after. That was in the original plan by Charles Pascal. It was endorsed, actually, by researchers, by child care advocates and by labour across the province. In fact, the rest of the country was watching the province of Ontario.

The premise of that plan was that we would make use of the current infrastructure in the province of Ontario, which are schools. Because the children were going into full-day kindergarten—ages four, five and six—we would make use of that infrastructure, those schools in those communities, and employ ECEs from 7 o'clock in the morning until 1 o'clock, and then 1 until 6. This was a huge boost to the early childhood educators as well, because for too long, as a group and as a sector, they had been neglected. They were on the bottom of the food chain. They were paid very little money. They were doing split shifts, the early and then the night shift. It was basically just a disrespectful position for them to be in in the province because they were never acknowledged as the professionals that they are.

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It's very similar, actually, to the personal support workers in the province of Ontario and, for a long time, early childhood educators, which is again a mainly female-dominated field—with training, with tons of training. One of the most important jobs that anyone can have is working with young minds, with young children, ensuring that they are safe, ensuring that they are nurtured and ensuring that they are cared for and loved. You can't put a price tag on the compassion; I can tell you that much.

When the child care sector, though, realized that the Liberal government had not fully realized the negative impact that full-day kindergarten would have on the entire sector, a sector which was already vulnerable, they pushed back on this plan because child care in the province of Ontario relies so heavily on those school-age fees. In fact, those school-age fees basically subsidize entire centres. When child care centres were going to lose that important factor, they saw that there wasn't necessarily a sustainable plan for them. So they pushed back, and the Liberal government caved on it, which is really a missed opportunity. Instead of coming to the table and saying, "We understand what the real situation is. We understand that child care in the province has no true sustainable plan. We're going to support child care"—so that would be age zero to 3.8—"but we're going to carry on with this plan because we understand that creating child care spaces for those school-age kids can be done around community hubs."

This vision of community hubs was a good vision. We should have followed through on it. That's what we did in Waterloo, though, and I'm very proud to have been the

chair during that time. I tell you, if you can survive that piece of history, you can do almost anything. The MPPs came in and they said, "We don't like the pushback that we're getting." The Waterloo Region District School Board, to some degree the Waterloo Catholic and the Ottawa-Carleton followed through on some hybrid version of what was originally the plan. In Waterloo region, in that school board, to date we've created almost 1,600 child care spaces, at no cost to the taxpayer because the parent fees pay for the before-and-after—that's at \$24 a day. There are parents in the province of Ontario who cannot believe that a child can come in to a quality setting with a play-based curriculum and have qualified early childhood educators work with them throughout the day. That's making use of the current infrastructure. It should be happening in Hamilton. It should be happening across the province. It really does speak to the vision of child care and of education. I'm proud that we got that accomplished, and I think that the research will show that we made the right decision. It took some leadership, it took some discipline and it also took a new relationship between child care and education.

That comes back to this bill, Mr. Speaker. A strong system of child care and early years programs and services increases labour market attachment, as I've already said. It enables parents to continue participation in the workforce, or education or retraining.

To support the particular cultural and linguistic needs of aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, as well as francophone communities, Ontario needs child care options that are responsive and that are adaptable.

We have seen some tragedies, as I've mentioned. I think it's important to say the names of these young children whom we failed. The system failed these children. When you talk to these parents, they had no choice but to leave those children in those care options, because choice in child care is not the reality for the majority of parents in the province of Ontario.

There are some elements, though, of this legislation that, again, I think all members could support.

Unlicensed child care providers must count their own children: It only makes sense. After all, your own children need care as much as other children. This is common sense. If this gets to committee, we're going to try to make this a factor.

Unlicensed providers can only operate in one location: This is an issue that we're going to deal with at committee as well.

Unlicensed child care providers can't call themselves a child care centre. If you have, like exists here on the east side of Toronto, three houses that have almost 20 children in each house, you should not be able to call yourself a child care centre just because you have children and because they are congregated in one location. That does not make you a child care centre. We need oversight with regard to this.

There have been some leaders on the child care file who have greatly impacted the advocacy that I've been able to accomplish through the Ontario Coalition for

Better Child Care. They're a very informed voice. We were part of the Child Care Action Network in Waterloo region. It's important to listen to the voices of parents. It's important, of course, to work closely with municipalities.

Now school boards are a major part. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that every school board in the province is receiving funding to help them navigate through the before-and-after extended day model? It would be interesting for me to find out how many of those school boards are actually following through with that funding and making sure that they are engaging the community in an inclusive model of child care.

I recently had a great opportunity, as the MPP for Kitchener-Waterloo, to honour one of the champions in child care. Her name is Penny Curtis. She received the Leading Women Building Communities Award. She was very political in her acceptance speech. She said that we must do better; we can do better.

Getting this piece of legislation to committee is one of the first steps to securing a stronger child care model. In

the broader sense, while the rules may be necessary, we also have to ask: Why are so many children in unlicensed child care? That Ontario only has spaces for 20% of children is a huge red flag. No amount of rules for unlicensed providers will change that. This piece of legislation does not address the bigger issue: that there is a lack of affordable, accessible child care in the province of Ontario.

We from the NDP caucus are determined to change this. We are looking at creative options, and we're looking forward to this piece of legislation getting to committee so that we can strengthen it and so that we can make sure that the needs of children come first, that it is child-focused and not just focused on the politics at hand.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 1 May 2014

Jeudi 1^{er} mai 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 May 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} mai 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Barrie had completed his speech and we were about to begin questions and comments. Without his presence today, we now look to further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to add a few words to Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. Basically, this bill talks about the procurement of big infrastructure projects and says that we should have a plan in the future for big infrastructure projects, because we know that we've had some serious issues with some big infrastructure projects. But the bill, in itself, does not tell us exactly what the plan will be. The bill tells us that we should have a plan.

It also makes a little bit of a change regarding the use of architects in our province, and it also opens the door to looking at trades, but that's all it does. We don't know how things will change for trades, we don't know how things will change for architects, and we certainly don't know what the infrastructure plan for the next 10 years, five years or even next year is going to look like.

But one thing we know for sure is that this idea that P3 is the way to go forward for infrastructure is deeply embedded into this Liberal government's way of moving forward with infrastructure, and it becomes even more embedded once you look at what they're trying to do with Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

Well, let me talk to you, Speaker, about what P3 means from the ground up. What does that private-public partnership, which is a 3P, really mean when infrastructure in Ontario is built that way, rather than the regular way of doing things where the government would hire contractors, they would build the infrastructure, and the government would own it, maintain it and keep ownership of it?

They have changed the name. They now call it alternate procurement financing—APF; I've forgotten—

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: AFP.

M^{me} France Gélinas:—thank you—alternate financing and procurement, but it's the same thing. It's a P3, just under a different name. I call it P3; you can call it whatever you want; it's the same thing. It's private-public partnership. For some reason, there is this ideology that if you bring the private sector in, all things are going to be better, no delays will happen, things will be on time and on budget. Basically, what those deals do is that, because construction is an ongoing thing, because you cannot see into the future of sometimes a one-, two- or three-year project exactly how things will do, the government gives whoever builds a premium to assume the risk so that they're on time and on budget.

At the centre of it is: How much money do you pay for that premium for them to assume the risk? This is something pretty intangible. How much risk is there? Well, as you become better and better at framing infrastructure projects, you would think that the government—the Minister of Transportation is just going by; sorry, Minister of Infrastructure. You would figure that there is a capacity and knowledge within his ministry, and as you do more and more of those projects you become better and better, so that the risks diminish. But that's not how P3 alternate procurement and financing works. What happens is that the people of Ontario, the taxpayers, through the government, agree to pay a premium so that the construction company, and usually their consortium, assume the risk.

As I said, this is something pretty intangible. Everybody can tell you how much a two-by-four costs and how much a load of cement costs. Those, we can shop around. They have a fixed price. We know what influences the price of wood, nails, cement, steel and everything else. But risk? It's way out there in the grey decision-making zone, and frankly, it's a bit of a guessing game, with more lawyers involved than you could ever dream of. This is how we end up with P3s, where the taxpayer is on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars for things of

no value, for a consortium to have assigned risk that may or may not materialize.

I happen to be on public accounts. Public accounts is the committee that looks at the work of the Auditor General. The Auditor General knows a thing or two about a balance sheet. He—now she—knows a thing or two about whether the taxpayers of Ontario are getting good value for the money that has been spent. I decided to bring with me this morning the Auditor General's annual report that he did on a P3 project, a specific one about the Brampton hospital that he did. But after he had done this, he decided that there had been so many millions of dollars wasted on the Brampton hospital because we had gone P3 rather than the regular way of building hospitals that he did a special section in his report that he called "Recommendations for Future P3 Infrastructure Development Projects." He did that years ago, but some of those have never been implemented, and some of those would need to be implemented.

We have a chance through this bill that is in front of us right now, Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, to take his good advice and to make things better so that as we continue to build infrastructure—we will continue to need new hospitals, new schools, new courthouses, new bridges and new highways. It will always be there, either new ones or major refurbishing of existing ones. Under "Decision to Adopt P3," he says, "There was no formal assessment of the costs and benefits of all available procurement alternatives." This is at the core of what is wrong with Bill 141. Bill 141 is married to this idea that we will take an alternate procurement and financing method, no matter what happens. But the Auditor General shows us—and he has shown us in so many instances—that, had we taken the time to compare it to other ways of financing, we would have gotten better value for our money.

0910

He goes on to the lesson learned. He says: "The costs and benefits of all feasible procurement alternatives should be evaluated. Consideration should be given to expanding the involvement and expertise of Infrastructure Ontario to all infrastructure projects."

What he's saying is that the people at Infrastructure Ontario have started to develop quite a bit of expertise in writing up those contracts, but they shouldn't be married to the idea that the only way to finance them is through P3 or alternate procurement and financing. The Auditor General is saying to look at some of the conventional methods of financing and consider them all.

His second recommendation about the decision regarding P3s is, "In Ontario only a limited number of contractors have the capacity to undertake large institutional projects. The bundling of capital and operational support services might have further limited competition and reduced value for money."

He goes on to say: "Before a decision is made to enter into an AFP arrangement, a comprehensive market assessment should be carried out."

When you bundle too many things together, you are very limited as to how many people have the expertise to

carry out that work, to the point where we have so few bidding for those projects—they're all international conglomerates, but so few of them that, really, there is no competition between them. They already know that they are the only game in town so the government will have to deal with them.

There's still a lot that I could have said. Unfortunately, my time is up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: The opposition has been extending the debate on Bill 141. This is a very important bill, and we've been debating it now for 11 hours. Over 50 members have spoken to this bill.

It's clear that the majority of the members in this House support this bill, so I'm asking that the members opposite stop delaying the bill. Let's get it through the second reading, get it passed and get it into committee so that we can continue what this government does best: Let's create jobs across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Nickel Belt always adds value when she comments on legislation, and for the member opposite, on the government side, to imply that what she says is not important and that you're only interested in the time—you should have thought of that a couple of years ago when you prorogued the House, which caused all of the legislation here to be piled up. It's a demonstration that under the Kathleen Wynne government, they cannot manage the agenda. That's clearly what has happened here.

It's the budget today. We know there's going to be an enormous deficit. We know there's going to be more reckless spending. Yet we're here talking about infrastructure, which is really future debt.

In the last couple of weeks, they've announced about \$6 billion in new spending. Where on earth, respectfully, are they going to get that money? They're going to get it from the hard-working taxpayers who have a job left in Ontario. In this budget, they're going to whack people with another \$2,500 tax—\$2,500 in taxes a year—to fund an unsustainable pension plan that they have. At least, this is my understanding; we'll certainly hear the details this afternoon.

Bill 141 is with respect to the infrastructure that creates jobs. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has a plan. It's the million-jobs plan. It works. The fundamental elements of creating an environment for investment and jobs are in that plan. He said repeatedly to the leader and, for that matter, to the Minister of Infrastructure, to adopt the plan. He's willing to sacrifice the hard work that he has put into that plan and allow Ontarians to have opportunities for a job and a prosperous future. But that's not the plan in Ontario. The plan in Ontario is to increase taxes and reduce services. That's kind of what I see.

Ultimately it comes down to trust: Who can you trust in the province of Ontario? I don't think the current government should be allowed to govern any longer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt. It's the first time that I've had an opportunity to actually weigh in on this particular bill, Bill 141, that's before us today. I'm glad that she spent her 10 minutes talking about P3s, or the alternate financing proposal, because I can tell you that in my riding a new hospital was built in the last couple of years under a P3 model: the St. Catharines site of the Niagara Health System. That hospital ended up costing more than double what the taxpayer-funded hospital in Peterborough, just five short years earlier, cost. I think it was 60% more or—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —50% more. The problem with that is that it isn't good taxpayer value when you're going out and paying double what you could have spent for public services in this province. The Auditor General apparently said that a number of years ago. I don't know whether that was under the Liberal government, that that report came out. I'm assuming that it was. But the government hasn't paid attention to what the Auditor General actually told them, and they continue to go out and do projects under a P3 model. The issue in the AG report was the Brampton hospital, but now here we are again. I think in the budget leaks that we've seen there are some big infrastructure dollars. I'm hoping that the Liberal government or the government of the day, whoever that is, actually pays heed to the Auditor General's report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Just in response to the Conservative member, minority governments expect co-operation on non-contentious, good legislation. I think if we've listened to the debate, that's what we've had on this. This is an important bill to move forward. I'm calling on all the other parties to stop stalling, help us pass second reading and refer the bill to committee for further consideration.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nickel Belt, you have two minutes for a response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was the first time that I had an opportunity to talk to Bill 141. I talked for 10 minutes, and I promise you I won't drag the debate; I will sit down after my two minutes are done. But P3s have had an impact on so many communities. I do the critic for health. We tried really, really hard, for each of those hospitals that were built under a P3, to get information. I could have brought it today: I filed an FOI request for the Ottawa general that was built under a P3. I got a stack of nothing but blacked-out paper. The only numbers left on those stacks of paper were the page numbers. It was impossible to find out anything else about that P3. Yet this is something that the Auditor General talks about: the need for those projects to be more transparent.

So I'm saying that we have a bill in front of us, Bill 141. Why don't we follow some of the recommendations

that the Auditor General has shown? When the Auditor General says things like, "\$95 million in risk transfer to the private sector was not realizable"—\$95 million was paid for the risk. We got no value for money for that \$95 million—and \$95 million is a lot of money. That would pay you all of the home care that people would need. That would open up 60 new community health centres in communities that need them. It would make a huge difference.

What I'm saying is, why don't we take the time to look at Bill 141 and take this opportunity to take some of the recommendations that come from the Auditor General and amend the bill so that we take advantage of his expertise?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Cambridge.

Interjections.

0920

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the cheering gallery as well.

It's always a pleasure to speak up on behalf of my constituents in the city of Cambridge and the township of North Dumfries on this, what amounts to May 1. The most important thing we can celebrate today is our first responders on our very first First Responders Day.

I am very pleased to speak to Bill 141, which is An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. I am pleased to talk about this because, in the context of previous work I have done—I'm not absolutely sure that this will be my final time to speak in this session, should we be thrust into an election based on the budget today, but I do want to remind this Legislature that, not too long ago—two years ago, in fact—I tabled a motion that we debated, my first piece of private member's business, which was the first piece of private member's business in this 40th Parliament, that talked about exactly the kinds of things that we were looking for at that time.

I'm going to remind this Legislature about what that motion consisted of. It consisted of a plea to have the House—"In the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario require" that the Premier "table, by March 1, 2012, a specific and detailed plan that outlines the current stage of the development process, the timelines for proceeding to any subsequent stage, the deadlines for project completion, and how the government plans to pay for the construction and operation of all the hospital expansion projects promised before and during the 2011 Ontario general election."

Mr. Speaker, we debated that motion in this Legislature. It was the united force of the opposition, both the Progressive Conservative and the NDP caucuses, that voted in favour of this motion. This motion passed this Legislature, and I think, for the very first time—we passed it in 2011—for the very first time, we are now looking at a bill, which was introduced on November 26, 2013, that may, in fact, get us a little bit closer to what we were asking for at that time.

Because I know the government members in this Legislature today are going to say that we are discussing

this bill ad nauseam, I want to state that I will take any and every opportunity to speak up for infrastructure projects that are of concern to my constituents. I will always stand up for my constituents, particularly when we've waited so long for infrastructure projects to come to my constituency. It's my obligation as the representative for Cambridge and North Dumfries township to bring that voice to Queen's Park and to make sure this government understands that we've waited a long time for our hospital expansion project to proceed.

This was the first vote we've ever had on hospital expansions in this Legislature. It was the PCs and the NDP that voted in favour of that motion, and the Liberal caucus that voted against it. I want to make that very clear, because if we are thrown into an election—I know a lot of people are going to say a lot of different things, but I want to put it on the record for people in this Legislature and for my constituents back home that I will always support our infrastructure projects that emerge in our community. That is my number one objective: to bring their voice here to Queen's Park.

There are a number of things this bill does that I think deserve some consideration. We do need, as I stated way back in 2011, a long-term infrastructure plan. It's not just enough to put this plan on the table. We have to have the means of understanding that, when we say something is going to happen within 10 years, we have to provide the means to actually achieve that: What the plan is, what are the timelines, how we're actually going to pay for the infrastructure projects that were promised.

Every election, we see these infrastructure projects dangled in front of constituents like they're candies to be given away. I think what we would do well to do—we could serve our constituents far better if we based decisions on infrastructure on evidence rather than politics, made sure that we're doing this in a manner that is consistent with the best advice, and not talking about these things in terms of who may or may not win elections. I think we would do a whole lot better if we were doing that.

This bill presents long-term planning, it presents guiding principles, it presents ideas about project prioritization, it talks about promoting design and excellence in public works, and I do understand that currently there has been some debate about some safety concerns. I know that my colleagues from the New Democrats have raised this with respect to highways being constructed in the Windsor area.

I think what's important, also, is the skills training and apprenticeship part of this piece of legislation. I think we have been on record consistently in this Legislature as standing up for our skilled trades and to provide opportunities for them.

So there are a lot of things that I would say have merit in this piece of legislation, things that I have long supported and would like to see further debated. But I will take the opportunity at every given chance to stand up for my constituents and to stand up for what I have been doing in this Legislature time and time again.

I do want to take some time to talk a bit about some of the things that have been important to understand. We need infrastructure investments, and the prioritization of those investments has to be done. I think everyone in this Legislature acknowledges that there is a need to have those kinds of ideas put forward. I think everybody understands that we have to have a plan in place for financing those projects, and debates—something the member from Nickel Belt has raised already—in terms of those financing arrangements ought to be debated and considered. I think the government should publish, at a minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs with a strategy to meet those needs. I think those are the kinds of things that we would look for and would like to discuss at further length.

As this may be the last time I'm speaking in this Legislature before an election, I do want to say two things, because, these two members—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: I will be back, by the way, after this election—just to make sure that everyone is clear on that.

But I know we have two members of our caucus who will not be, as they are retiring, and they are both in the Legislature to talk about that. I want to say to the member for Newmarket–Aurora and to the member for Durham, I appreciate the mentorship that you have provided. They have, obviously, been mentors to first-time MPPs in our caucus.

I think the member for Newmarket–Aurora has written the book on how the opposition should act when it comes to different things, particularly his pursuit of Ornge.

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: I think that deserves a bit of applause for the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

I do want to pay tribute as well to the member for Durham, who I think is probably the most well-read MPP in this Legislature. He will speak on any bill at any time, on a moment's notice, because he has actually read every piece of legislation that's come forward. He has actually debated every piece of legislation that's come forward, and he might also have provided and produced one or two petitions on about every piece of legislation that has come to this Legislature.

I want to say that it is this idea of mentoring the younger MPPs on how to perform in their roles that I appreciate as a first-time MPP, and hope to continue in my pursuit for the truth in Ontario and for better public policy and better public administration.

So I want to congratulate the member for Durham on his excellent public service.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to say—as this is a moment where we can celebrate the public service of both of these gentlemen—that, in addition to doing incredible work in this Legislature, in our committees and in their performance in their own constituencies, these are just two fine, classy gentlemen. I would suggest to anybody that if you have a chance to meet them on an off-the-record basis, they are equally as wise and equally as trusted friends. I will certainly miss their presence here in this Legislature.

When I do come back, and when members of this Legislature do come back in the future, their work will be remembered. I want to thank them and congratulate them for their public service.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Who says we're going away?

Mr. Rob Leone: The member for Windsor–Tecumseh asks, “Who says we're going away?” I don't know if we're going away, but I do want to make sure that, if this is, indeed, the last bill we get to debate, I had that on record. I wanted to pay tribute to my colleagues.

That is basically what I wanted to say today. I look forward to further debate on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand and represent Windsor–Tecumseh in this Legislature. My friend from Cambridge said it all when he said that the number one objective for him was to bring his voice, the voice of his constituents, to the Legislature.

0930

I just heard the member from Durham talk about the flurry of announcements in the last week or so. I think he said that \$6 billion had been announced on infrastructure. This bill is a 10-year plan that lays out the government's intentions. I don't know; it's coincidental to think that these announcements were made just coincidental in the possible timing of a possible provincial election. Either the projects that have been announced were part of the plan all along—and if that's the case, it was old news and why polish them up and trot them out again and make announcements?—or they were new ideas, which calls into question, I believe, the integrity of the bill itself. Because if you're going to have a 10-year plan, why would you trot out an extra \$6 billion coincidental with the possibility of a provincial election? So we've got some problems with it.

I know the member from Nickel Belt talked earlier about her concerns with P3s, and we've seen those examples on the Herb Gray Parkway, where it hasn't worked because the government has negotiated away any ability for the Ministry of Transportation, the experts in this province, when they see a safety issue, to jump in and resolve it because they've turned it over to Infrastructure Ontario.

Having said that, I just want to quickly echo the member from Cambridge's comments on the member for Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Durham—two fine gentlemen, two fine friends. I'll certainly miss them after the election, whenever that is called.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning.

This is an important bill before us, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I think I've talked in the Legislature before about how extremely important this is to my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, and particularly on the Pickering side in Durham, where the development of the Seaton lands is essentially going to

double the size of Pickering. It's going to be very fast-growing.

But I've talked about this before, and so have many other people: Over 50 members have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate, and that debate has been going on for 11 hours. It's clear that most members of the House are going to support this. So is there really any benefit to have further debate? Probably not. I'm not hearing new information. I'm encouraging everyone to move this along, help us pass second reading and get this to committee for further consideration.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Certainly, I think we all echo the comments of the member from Cambridge with respect to the member from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Cambridge. And I was—

Interjection: Durham.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Durham; I'm sorry. I was elected with these two characters 19 years ago, as were Julia Munro and Jerry Ouellette. We've seen them in action. Other people here have seen them more recently in action. Whatever they're doing in the future—the organizations and the involvement they have—the people around them will certainly benefit.

I want to make mention of the member for Cambridge. Up his way, we read in the media for years the problems with Highway 7 and getting a bridge built. I've got a similar problem south of there on Highway 6. We have need of a truck bypass in Hagersville. Tractor-trailers come through town; they can't turn at the intersections. I saw an accident on Monday, driving up—a serious accident. A tractor-trailer on the other side of Main Street pushed an SUV into a tree. A week or two before, a tractor-trailer hit a well-known businessman right in front of his Main Street business.

The noise, the vibration: I hope to talk about this a little further in my presentation. It's fairly simple. It's the need for a truck route to alleviate the noise downtown, to alleviate the vibration downtown. I spend time sitting on people's front porches on Main Street in the town of Hagersville in Halimand county.

These are heavy-duty tractor-trailers. They carry steel coming up from US Steel. They carry scrap going back down to US Steel from the Hamilton area. I just use that as one example of why we have to continue discussing this particular piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about infrastructure in the province of Ontario, because in the grand scheme of things, and I use “scheme” very gently, it is a huge opportunity to create economic prosperity for the province. Listening closely to the member from Cambridge, I share in his philosophy that you need to have a plan. You need to stick to that plan, because municipalities count on that, but you also have to have a plan to pay for it, which is very interesting in the context of what is happening in the last two or three

weeks and the announcements on transit and infrastructure from the Minister of Transportation. Actually, almost every minister has made huge announcements around infrastructure. It's like they have money, right?

We did hear very clearly from the Auditor General that the \$95 million with the AFP and the P3—of course, they have the OPP here as well, these days. They're getting very popular around this place. But we did not get value for the money, for the risk transfer. That \$95 million was not realized throughout the one example that she gave.

So we have to have a piece of legislation and a strategy which actually benefits the people of this province and, in the meantime, provides the structural plan to create the infrastructure and then also the financing which guarantees it. We have seen some of the most political announcements on infrastructure from this government of late in this Legislature. We have a fictional version of two-way, all-day GO trains. We have a re-announcement and a re-announcement and a re-announcement to Highway 7. That shovel has been in that ground, and that ribbon has been cut and is getting frayed now. And now, of course, we have the Herb Gray Parkway, whose theme song, unfortunately, will be A Bridge Over Troubled Waters. So there is so much work to be done on this file. We need to make sure that this legislation works for the people of the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the Minister of Consumer Services and the members for Windsor—Tecumseh, Haldimand—Norfolk and Kitchener—Waterloo for their comments and questions. I do echo the concerns that the NDP have raised, as well as I have and members of our PC caucus over the last several weeks. This is a \$46-billion pre-election spree that the government has undertaken: \$29 billion for transit, \$11 billion for hospital infrastructure and \$6 billion in other spending equals about \$46 billion. It's the largest, I would say, seat-saver program we've ever seen. It is concerning when we have a purported plan no less than November 26, 2013, which is only a few short months ago, and now we have extra things that are just completely added.

It questions the sincerity of whether this plan, the plan that they are actually trying to enunciate in this legislation, is as sincere as they would like people to believe. I have serious questions and concerns about that sincerity. I would like to, obviously, support infrastructure projects, but I need to see where this money is coming from. I need to make sure that this government is not spending out of its means, because the future of this province depends on that. Our children's future depends on it.

I think that, as we discuss and debate and deliberate over this piece of legislation today and this morning, and certainly in the budget debates that we will have or may have in the near future, I would have to hope that we are being truthful with the facts about the state of our fiscal finances to provide for the services that people desire and the infrastructure projects that this province needs. That

is my great hope. It's what I asked for way back in 2011, and I continue to fight for those things today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good morning. It is certainly a pleasure to stand and provide some comments on behalf of the perspectives of people in Algoma—Manitoulin on Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

Just off the top, I would like to say good morning to a friend of mine in Mindemoya who I refer to as Mrs. "Grandma" Trepanier, and also, in Gore Bay, Rose Thompson, who are more than likely watching, on TV this morning, the debate that's going on, enjoying their morning cup of tea.

0940

In my last constituency week, I actually had the pleasure of meeting up with them again, and it is just amazing how in touch people are. Although they're not close by, they're really watching all of us here at Queen's Park in regard to what we do, what we say, how we conduct ourselves and the day-to-day activities that go on here.

Earlier, my colleague from Nickel Belt really articulated her point on the P3s, and the concerns that she raised are very much a huge sentiment that we have here. But when I look at this bill, I'm looking at it as far as building bridges. When I was first elected—I've always said that I'll give credit where credit is due, and where you have to criticize, I will criticize. I'm really happy that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is in the House this morning, because I just want to build that bridge with him because he did actually take the time to come to my constituency and sit down with some of the municipalities that had some infrastructure concerns.

We actually talked a lot about what the challenges are that they have there. One of the biggest challenges that we have in Algoma—Manitoulin is particularly the operating costs of a lot of our water treatment plants, the high costs, and the lack of capacity that we have within taxpayers to come up with the funds for those operating costs, and the huge challenges that these individuals face.

When you look at the principles of this bill, when you're looking at taking a long-term view and where the decision-makers are to take account of the needs of Ontarians, being mindful of the demographics and how the trends are going on in Ontario—that statement really resonates with people in my riding, particularly in the community of the North Shore, where Mayor Randi Condie and a lot of the community members that are there, like Joyce Robitaille, and individuals that are really hurting in those areas in order to find the funds that they need in order to maintain the level of service or to make sure that they have the dollars available at the end of the month, where decisions are being made, that impact their lives, out of southern Ontario.

You have to understand—and I don't know how this plan was reached back then. But where you have a small community—and I'm going to try and keep my comments towards the community of the North Shore.

The community was forced to go into an amalgamation, and one of their huge concerns was the operating services. It's a wide, very separated—the major points of this area are three in nature: You have the Serpent River area, you have the Algoma Mills area, and then you have the Pronto area. Some of them are, again, very concerned about their water treatment plants, but a decision was made at one point in time where the water treatment plant was downloaded on the municipality, and it was their responsibility to pay for it. It was downloaded on a group of 69 individuals. Now, lo and behold, the second part of this community, they were also told that they were going to have to invest not only in a new water treatment plant but also in a water and sewage plant. Those people who were in that area, who remain there today, are roughly about 29. How did we come up with the calculation that this was cost-effective for these two areas?

When we make these statements in regard to being mindful and making 10-year plans, what it means to communities across my riding is, "How is this going to affect us? What are we going to do? How are we going to be able to finance it? What are they telling us?"

Unfortunately, in a lot of these small communities, we don't have those engineers in our back pocket. We don't have those consultants. They're all here in southern Ontario. And you know what? It's a heck of a cost to get those individuals up to our area. We always rely on what their expertise is and what they have to say. Then, lo and behold, we sign in to large amounts of monies that we're going to have to pay for these projects that are in their communities. So these are huge, huge concerns.

We also made comments in regard to the concerns that we have in regard to the experts on this file, and the other stakeholders that we haven't taken into consideration or we haven't reached out to or we haven't maybe listened to the red flags that they've been raising with us.

For the record, I'd like to read in some of those concerns today, particularly from the building trades and a number of the construction groups that are out there. Project bundling can significantly reduce the ability of smaller local firms from participating in key Ontario infrastructure projects. Member companies have experienced significant problems on the bundling issue with things such as the holdbacks of payments on these large projects which also makes it difficult for small firms to manage cash flow; payments are withheld from subcontractors until the contractor gets paid; subcontractors don't have the same ability to wait for payment.

I've seen this time and time again where individuals, particularly in the north in my riding, in Wawa, where there was a subcontractor who was hired to do some work on a particular highway project but unfortunately the subcontractor wasn't being paid by the larger contractor, and it was creating financial hardship. What you have to understand is that these small contractors just don't have that amount of room to manoeuvre. Their payroll—they're basically going from month to month, from pay to pay. If you're telling them that you're going to withhold, whether it's \$100,000 or \$500,000, the im-

port and magnitude that it means to those communities is huge—and also to those local contractors.

The other concern is about projects that are ongoing. Again, my colleague from Nickel Belt touched on the P3s. I think I don't want to waste anybody's time talking about that anymore.

Recently, IO has handled highway projects, namely the super projects of the Windsor-Essex parkway, Highway 407 and the Eglinton LRT. These projects are worth billions of dollars and generally attract major international builders to Ontario. The concern here is that several of these big international players, particularly those from Spain, are subsidized by their federal governments, allowing them to bid at lower prices than Ontario-based companies.

Now on that point, particularly as a critic for our party for northern development and mines, I had brought in a project where we should be looking at providing those resources and, if we have the infrastructure here in Ontario, to look at Ontario before we look outside. If we have the capacity and the skills and tradesmen that are here, and we have the people that are in the know to do this work, why wouldn't this bill contain anything in regard to having an Ontario content requirement? I would like to see that in Ontario.

If we're talking about building our infrastructure and talking about prosperity and Ontarians, why don't we see more of a flavour and a sense for Ontario, within the contents of this bill?

I do also want to bring up a point in regard to—again, sometimes you walk into the House expecting to say a few things but then you just get sidetracked by a discussion that you have with a colleague and with building bridges around this place. I definitely came here with the intent of building bridges. I'm happy that I've done that over the course of my stay here at Queen's Park, and I will continue doing that. I enjoy the discussions that I've had with my colleagues here to my right and also across the way.

I think, essentially, when we come here we want to get those results done and we want to bring some of those benefits back to individuals into our ridings. But in particular with this one, when you make these grand statements—I don't like using that term, but it is a motherhood statement that we see in the beginning of this policy. It sounds great and it means well, but there's really a lot of work that needs to be done on it. For communities, like in my area, where we've had the opportunity to have a discussion with some of my colleagues, it is really important to them that, going forward—they are very concerned in regard to how these 10-year projects or visions are going to impact them.

Before we go down the route of implementing these policies, we need to really look carefully at how this is going to affect them, not only through their policies and regulations, but how it's going to impact their lives financially.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'm pleased to rise today in response to Bill 141 and to make some comments. We've had this discussion now for over 11 hours. We've had 55 members, so more than half of our members have spoken in this House with respect to this bill, and all seem to be in favour of this bill. We need to bring this forward to the next step, which is, of course, to committee.

0950

I know we've been hearing much about the Right Honourable Herb Gray parkway that is, of course, being built in my backyard in Windsor. As a result of that project, I've been speaking with a number of local employers who really have spoken to me about the importance of upgraded infrastructure across the province, and the importance of upgraded infrastructure with respect to economic development and the future prosperity of Ontario.

Ontario is a trade province and we need that upgraded infrastructure across all ways: across rail, across road, across any way that we can in order to ensure the prosperity of our province, and that's what we will continue to build on.

Speaking of the Right Honourable Herb Gray parkway, it's truly a transformative project, and I have to thank the Minister of Transportation and our government for moving forward with that project, because I know what it means to our community. It's transformative. It is going to add hundreds of acres to green space in our communities, kilometres of trails, really connect our neighbourhoods and really make a difference for our community. I'm pleased with that investment, that infrastructure project, and understand the importance of infrastructure to the development of jobs and the prosperity of our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: All of us in this House recognize the importance of having solid, sustainable infrastructure. It is essential to any competitive 21st century economy, and it is especially critical in a province such as Ontario, which has so many diverse needs, challenges and assets.

From that point of view, government obviously needs to take the long view when it comes to infrastructure planning and investment. At least part of that mandate is already being carried out by the government's ministries.

Transparent information is also critical to this sort of undertaking, and I don't know how well that will mesh with Infrastructure Ontario, which is a bit of a black box by its very nature.

Bill 141 also proposes that four conditions be applied to Ontario's infrastructure: an inventory of the infrastructure, an evaluation of the infrastructure, the age of the infrastructure assets and the conditions of those assets. All of this is fine and good, but I would agree with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora that a fifth element is needed; namely, a formalized and mandatory asset-management program. Without that tool, we can never accurately judge our most pressing priorities and where investments are best made.

Every infrastructure promise floated by this Liberal government is always made "subject to fiscal capacity." That makes sense. If there is no money, the work does not get done.

Maybe at some point, a member of the party opposite—preferably a cabinet minister—will lay out in black and white the government's plan to bring Ontario's runaway spending under control, and thereby eliminate the deficit. It is not a lot to ask, frankly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. John Vanthof: Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): No, it's just my throat—Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of my constituents from Timiskaming–Cochrane, and to follow my colleague, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. Something he always does, and that I try to emulate, is he always brings issues back to the people in his riding. That's the best way to explain things to people in this House, and also to demonstrate that you understand the issues in your riding.

Sometimes I get a bit upset when I hear: "We've had enough debate, because we've heard all the issues." I think the member from Algoma–Manitoulin made it very clear that he had issues that hadn't been brought up before in this House on this bill, and I think that's a good example of why debate is important in this House.

The bill we are discussing is Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. Basically, the bill is about developing a 10-year plan for infrastructure—very important. One would wonder why there wasn't a 10-year plan before, or a 20-year plan. Actually, in northern Ontario, we've got the northern growth plan, where we spend a lot of time discussing this, and transportation was part of the northern growth plan.

Again, consultation is part of the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act; yet, when our passenger train was cancelled in northern Ontario, there was no consultation. In northern Ontario, we would be happy with any train. We don't need the promise of the high-speed bullet train. Our train already took the bullet. But again, there was no consultation, and when you see things like that, you kind of wonder, are these acts or are they really for real? When you hear all these potential election promises—and that's what they are—where are they in these 10-year plans?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member from Mississauga–Cooksville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Streetsville.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Streetsville; my apologies.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. Cooksville is actually a long way away, and I'm sure my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville wouldn't appreciate my appropriating such an important part of eastern Mississauga.

You know, Speaker, there are so many things in this House that divide us, and very often properly divide us, because while we may have an aspiration for a strong and a prosperous Ontario, as parties, we often differ on how we wish to get there.

But there are many things that bring us together, and this is one of them. While it might be a simplification, it's probably okay to say that we all believe in apple pie, motherhood and infrastructure.

The debate on this bill is headed toward 12 hours. More than half of the Legislature has spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. I think nearly 60 of our members have done that, and it has been very clear that, as a Legislature, we intend to support this bill.

I would suggest it's now time to move past this bill, get it into committee, if we are all in support of it, and if it needs any refinement, let's have that refinement done in committee and let's get on to more substantive things in this Legislature. It's now time to call on our colleagues opposite, the Conservatives and the NDP, to put aside more debate on this bill and to get on to some things that make a difference in the province of Ontario.

For that reason, Speaker, I am hoping that members will send this bill to committee and get it enacted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the comments that came from the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Burlington, my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and also the member from Mississauga-Streetsville.

If we were to stand here and always rush through the discussions, we wouldn't get a good grasp of what the issues are across this province—for everyone. Yes, this is a good bill for us to push into committee in order to have those discussions. I think all of us agree that we need to bring those discussions to committee.

However, I want to express a really important point. This is the only opportunity that I have, for the people in Algoma-Manitoulin, to bring those points here, because we don't have the transportation that we need or that bullet train that we can get people from northern Ontario down to here. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It's a three-day expense when we are talking about having these individuals come down here and provide some type of testimony in front of the committee while they are sitting there. If you are telling me that we need to rush this through, then you are closing the voices of the people in Assiginack, Billings, North Shore and Killarney.

I was really happy that the minister actually took the time to come to my riding and listen to these individuals. We talked about a greater idea of how we can address this regionally, but we need to do it. We need to do it. They've heard the words; they have been told. They have met up numerous times. But this is the opportunity that we have, and those individuals deserve that action. They deserve to have a plan implemented to serve their needs, because it's costing them a lot of stresses and a lot of time as well.

The people up in Hornepayne: I'll always give them the opportunity to talk about the challenges that they have with their water service.

Also, there's another issue that we need where we're almost close, and it happens through discussions. It's because we've done it here. If you look at the people of Manitouwadge, I've worked with the ministers across the way and some colleagues, and we're close to getting a Caramat Road issue resolved, and I'm hoping it's done. But we've got to have those discussions and there's got to be a plan, and we've got to see an action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: I am very happy to rise and speak to Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I think we all recognize, and we've certainly heard in the debate today and in previous debates that infrastructure is vitally important to families and communities and is really the backbone of our economy. To help ensure the province's infrastructure investments continue to align with demographic, economic and environmental changes and the long-term needs of Ontarians, our government has introduced this bill, which would, if passed, ensure current and future governments regularly prepare a long-term infrastructure plan and that plans are updated at least every five years.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would also strengthen prioritization, promote high-quality infrastructure design and support job creation, training opportunities and economic growth. Our government has made an unprecedented investment in public infrastructure, with more than \$85 billion invested in public infrastructure since 2003. These investments have created or supported more than 600,000 jobs. We've committed to invest more than \$35 billion in infrastructure over the next three years, including about \$13.5 billion in 2013-14. Bill 141, if passed, would complement our government's plan to continue to build modern infrastructure in order to grow the economy and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to provide some context as to how we got here at this moment in time and debate. The bill was introduced last year in November 2013 and has seen significant debate in the House. According to my count, more than 58 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. The bill has been debated for almost 12 hours over the past six months.

Listening to the debate, it's been clear that the majority of this House is in support of this bill, yet the opposition parties are intent on continuing debate, and their only goal is to delay. The opposition has been putting up speaker after speaker. Surely, this signals that there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill. It is time that the bill pass second reading and be sent to committee, where the real work takes place. In committee, members of all parties will hear from all stakeholders who have an interest in this bill. In committee—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The reason I raise a point of order is, I'm the next speaker. I feel that my contribution to this debate will be meaningful. I have very, very important local issues to raise with respect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm sorry, I don't think that's a point of order, because I did recognize the speaker in the traditional manner.

The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I'm speaking about the committee process for this bill. Members will obviously have an opportunity to move amendments to strengthen this bill. At the same time, this House, if this piece of legislation moves on to committee, can move on to debate substantive matters. There are a number of pieces of important legislation already introduced which the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process. We obviously can't devote the necessary time to these important matters if we're forced to continue debating this bill.

I remind members of pieces of legislation such as the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, Ontario Immigration Act, Fair Minimum Wage Act, Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe act, and I could go on. We would like to spend time, on this side of the House, debating these pieces of legislation, but we can't until Bill 141 is dealt with. As a result, I move that this question be now put.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that the question be now put. There have been 27 speakers and over 11 and a half hours of debate. I feel there has been sufficient debate to allow the question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This vote will be deferred until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: No further business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry, recess of the House—until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

Walker, who are the family of our page, Ethan Walker. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I would like to welcome Dylan Fonner. He's a student from the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics in Akron, Ohio. It has been a pleasure having him here at Queen's Park, and I wish him well in his future law career.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome, in the east members' gallery, two of my colleagues from the MBA program at York University: Diarmuid Salvadori and Dorene Weston.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm happy to introduce a number of guests of our page: Mr. Scott Bowes; Katharine Bowes; Amber Bowes, her sister; and Ilah and Denis Dalke, the grandparents of Ashley Bowes. Welcome.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On behalf of the New Democrat Party, and our leader, Andrea Horwath, I want to extend a welcome to all our first responders here today on First Responders Day.

M. Bob Delaney: Je veux dire bienvenue aux étudiants d'immersion française from Britannia Public School.

I'd like to welcome the Britannia Public School French immersion class.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to introduce, once again, Michael Patrick, who's a PC candidate in the riding of Durham—his wife, Deb, will be joining us later—and also Trent Angiers, a member of my legislative staff. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome the students from St. Davids Public School, and their teachers and their parents. I hope they have a great day here at Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to welcome Ashan Fernando and Kyle Fitzgerald from the great riding of Pickering–Scarborough East to Queen's Park to be here for question period.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today I'd like to welcome the parents of page captain Brendan Sheppard: mother, Sheila Atkinson; father, Andrew Sheppard; and his sister, Linnea Sheppard. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would like to take a moment and acknowledge the MPP from York Centre: Monte Kwinter. My colleague, friend and parliamentary assistant will be entering his 30th year in public service tomorrow.

Monte, on behalf of all your colleagues in the House, I'd like to thank you for your years of service to the province, and wish you many more successful years.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I realize that there are quite a few more introductions to do, so I've asked for the clock to be stopped. I'll still give everyone enough time to introduce all of their guests; I think this is an important part of the visitors being here.

Finally, just to let you know, I've called the Guinness people; he has got so many records that it's getting tiresome. I thought maybe I'd let him know that.

Thank you, Monte.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to welcome to the Legislature today James and Anette Walker and Ashley

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Monte, from one Monte to another: Congratulations.

It is my pleasure today to introduce some visitors in the gallery. I'd like to introduce Nick Dicecco, a young constituent from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex who is very interested in politics, and my wife Kate's uncle, Peter Spadzinski, who's a former mayor of the municipality of McDougall in the district of Parry Sound. Welcome.

Hon. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce Max Hong, who is the father of today's page captain, Frank Hong, from Willowdale. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome my mother, Margaret Harris, who is at Queen's Park for her first time today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Today is Doctors' Day in Ontario. On this occasion, please join me in welcoming Dr. Ved Tandan, president of the Ontario Medical Association, and also his colleagues visiting the Ontario Legislature. Today they are having a reception at the committee room. I invite every member of this House to attend this reception at the committee room for lunch.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to welcome Warden Todd Case from the county of Lambton, and Councillor John Phair, township of Enniskillen, who will join us later today for the budget.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I noticed my colleague and friend from 1990, Mr. Bob Frankford, is here, the member for a riding somewhere out in Scarborough.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're stepping on me again, but I'll do that. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was so happy to see him, Speaker.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce my brother Michael and my sister-in-law Lisa, who are in the gallery today. A warm welcome on your first time here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Susan McMillan and Sandra Breedon, two of my staff from my constituency. They've never been to Queen's Park, and they're coming here for budget day.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to introduce Margo Burgess and Steve Barrette from Ottawa. They're in the east members' gallery. They are the parents of my legislative intern, Emily, who is also in the House today. They have travelled from Ottawa for a visit. This is their first time to Queen's Park, so please welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome Garrie Wright here, the commissioner of Toronto EMS, who was instrumental in bringing automatic external defibrillators to the province of Ontario. Garrie Wright, welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs. Oh, I guess he's not standing to introduce. He was standing to leave.

The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to also, on behalf of Tim Hudak and our entire caucus, extend our warmest wel-

come to all of the first responders who are joining us today.

I want to specifically recognize someone very special, and that is Nicole Taylor, who is in the gallery here. Nicole is someone who is working with first responders through her team, United by Trauma. I'd like to just introduce the rest of that team: Sam Reid—if you will stand, Sam, please—James Ward and Wayne Dufour. These are folks who are doing outstanding work on PTSD and support of first responders.

For those of you who may not have recognized Sam Reid, he is with Glass Tiger and, in addition to that, is doing this wonderful work for first responders. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final call for introductions?

Just in case it's not known, Glass Tiger is a rock-and-roll group. Just thought I'd offer that.

Mr. Frank Klees: May I?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): May you? No. You already had a statement.

All right. As is the tradition with the Speaker, we would like to introduce, from Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament, in the west members' gallery, Mr. Bob Frankford. Welcome.

The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: As members are aware, today is First Responders Day. I think you will find, Mr. Speaker, unanimous consent that, following deferred votes this morning, five minutes be allotted to each party to pay tribute to our first responders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The unanimous consent request is for a tribute to first responders, each party receiving five minutes, after the deferred votes.

Do we agree? Agreed.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, for the past month, your party has been busy announcing plans to spend billions of dollars that we don't have. This will be the second year in a row that economic growth has been stagnant in our province and that your government's deficit will get larger instead of smaller.

1040

Premier, this is not the road to recovery. A government that spends within its means and puts the right economic conditions for growth in place gives confidence to business and investors alike. Every other province in Canada understands that. So far, six have balanced their books, including the federal government.

Tim Hudak and the PCs have a plan to get Ontario back on track. It's called our million-jobs plan. Premier, if you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will come to order. Carry on, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, if you don't have a plan of your own, will you at least adopt ours?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, you've opened the door for me to make a comment now, instead of asking for quiet. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. My intention is to start right away.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I will give you this: You have a slogan. That is true. There is a slogan on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker. But what that slogan masks is that what the opposition, the Conservatives, would do is they would actually cut jobs. They would actually cut education. They would actually cut health care. They would not invest in infrastructure, and they would not partner with business in order to bring those jobs to Ontario.

So what we are going to do—and I look forward to the response when the budget is introduced this afternoon—is, we are going to build the province. Our plan believes in the opportunity in this province and believes in the possibility of more jobs coming to the province, because we've demonstrated that that can happen. We've demonstrated that making those investments actually is what we need in order to grow the economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, when the finance minister comes in here this afternoon in his new shoes, I hope they're chest waders, because he's going to need them to get through that river of red ink that you are creating.

You are driving business out of our province with your anti-growth and pro-special-interest agenda. Increasing the cost of doing business is undermining our ability to compete and is crippling our recovery.

The PC Party has a different approach. We have developed a jobs plan that will give every business an incentive to grow and be successful, not just your chosen few that were already succeeding without your handouts. We are calling for lower corporate taxes, lower energy rates, reduced red tape, more trade with our neighbours and more skilled trades positions to meet the needs of Ontario. That's our plan. We won't ignore the problem and hope that it will go away.

Premier, you have no credible plan of your own. I ask you one more time: Will you adopt our plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: A plan that is really the right to work for less, Mr. Speaker, is not where we are

going to go. We believe that having a highly skilled workforce is absolutely a foundation of our economic future.

What they would do is they would actually cut the knees out from under the education system. They would fire education workers. They would undermine the education system. We are not going to do that.

I wanted to take the member opposite up on another thing that he said. He talked about the federal government being able to balance their budget. Mr. Speaker, I hope that he pays very close attention this afternoon, because one of the reasons that our revenues are in trouble is because the federal government has treated Ontario differently than every other province in the country.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Throw Zimmer out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's the blame game, and I know you're good at it.

Premier, I get that you won't take our plan. Would you agree to at least take a couple of sessions of credit counselling? It might be helpful.

Today, you have an opportunity to change direction, to finally start climbing out of the hole you've created instead of digging deeper. Our million-jobs plan will restore the confidence of business, investors and credit rating agencies. It's about time that Ontario move back to its rightful place: at the head of the pack, leading this Confederation, being the economic engine of Canada once again.

It's clear you have no plan and will only take us down the road to higher unemployment and deepening debt. Even Quebec Premier Couillard gets it. He understands that the only way to restore confidence in his province is to get their fiscal house in order.

Premier, we need to do that here. Will you change direction today, start moving Ontario out of the hole instead of going deeper and deeper?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I absolutely agree with the member opposite that we need to be leaders in Confederation. Ontario is a very, very important component of this great country of ours, which is why it would be terrific if the federal government treated Ontario in the same way that it treats every other province.

But having said that, we understand that being fiscally responsible is critical. We understand that making sure that we grow the economy and making sure that we work with business, partner with business—and I would ask the member opposite to ask OpenText and Chrysler what they think about their plan to back away from partnership

with business—we believe that working with business and being a partner with business, as we are a partner with labour, is the way to make sure that the investments in this province are made and jobs come to the province which lead to the future growth.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, we took the time to introduce first responders. I now want to take the time to thank them for being here. We have invited them to celebrate first responders. It's really a celebration of our first responders.

I also want to thank the Premier, the leader of the official opposition, the leader of the third party and every member in this House for supporting Bill 15, which made this proclamation possible. Without the unanimous consent of this Legislature, this would not have happened. So it's great that we can come together.

Now comes the tough question for the Premier. Immediately following the tribute that we will give, we will be gathering in the front of the Legislature to take a commemorative photograph with all MPPs and our first responders. My question to the Premier is this: Will you join us for that picture?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Please. I don't want to waste a warning on this one. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I would be happy to join you.

First of all, I just want to take a moment to tell the member opposite that no one knew what your question was going to be, and everyone was a little, "Where's he going?" But you had spoken to me earlier, and I appreciate that.

I want to acknowledge the first responders who are here and I want to thank them so much for what they do every single day. They walk into danger. They go out of their doors and they don't know what they are going to find, so thank you very, very much.

1050

I was in a fire hall yesterday making an announcement with my colleagues about adding six more cancers to the list of presumptive diseases. The reality is, it doesn't matter where good ideas come from. It doesn't matter because it was the right thing to do, and I just want to thank our firefighters and all of our first responders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Premier. That was the best answer you've given in the 18 years that I've been here.

Speaking of first responders, the first responders in our air ambulance service have been under much discussion in this place over the last number of months and I wanted to pay a special tribute to them for the service they are performing in our province.

After two years of public hearings into the air ambulance scandal, the public accounts committee signed off yesterday on a summary report, after some 147 hours of testimony and 85 witnesses. We now look forward to seeing that report tabled. We believe it will be tabled on Monday, subject to what happens here.

Regardless of the timing of an election, will the Premier commit that that report will be tabled?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking to the government House leader because I don't want to say something that would be outside the bounds of the protocols, but from my perspective, it's important that we all see what's in that report and that we find a way to make sure that it is shared. I will make that commitment only with the caveat that we have to follow all of the rules, and at the first opportunity that we would get it tabled, absolutely.

I also wanted to just note that the Mississauga first responders who were injured in last week's fire and explosion deserve our particular thoughts and prayers today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, the reason that I asked that question to the Premier is that two years of very hard work—I want to commend my colleagues on that committee, of all parties. I believe that the work that committee has done has produced a report that will be very important, not only to the Ministry of Health, but to every other ministry in the government. We don't want to see that report in any way somehow not see the light of day.

So notwithstanding the timing of an election—we know that if an election is called and that report has not yet been tabled, typically, it would never see the light of day. It is possible for us to agree together, regardless of the timing, that that report will be made public.

Will the Premier, without any qualification, make that commitment to us today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This afternoon, the Minister of Finance is going to be presenting a budget, which I anticipate will enjoy the support of this Legislature, and our intention is to proceed both with debate around the budget and debate around legislation. And over the course of that, certainly, the report is in the hands of the committee. The Chair of the committee will have an opportunity to table his report in the House. I think I speak for all members that we look forward to seeing the report, and certainly the government will be responding to its contents.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. It's a big day at Queen's Park.

On Tuesday, the Premier said that the minister's office's staff was first briefed on safety and durability regarding the girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013. However, yesterday, the Premier, in speaking about the 12 meetings in which girders were on the agenda between December and June, 2013, said, "The fact is that those meetings took place.... There was not sufficient information during that time period" to make "definitive recommendations on safety."

Will the Premier tell us which statement is true? Were they talking about safety prior to June 14 or weren't they? Because, clearly, safety was an issue during discussions in those meetings.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have been through this for many days. You have said things that are so inaccurate that they were nothing more than an attempt, I think, to smear reputations. I'm still waiting for an apology from the member opposite. I met with my deputy minister again this morning. I reviewed it with my deputy minister, who went back through her notes and she confirmed again that there was no discussion of safety issues, nor were any issues raised with her or me.

She also confirmed with me that, in early June, I approached her and I asked her to look into the matter, which she did promptly. She came back and said there could be concerns, we should look at it further, which was the result of the June 19 meeting which led to the independent review and the discovery in late August, as a result of that review and testing, that there was a problem. This is so crystal clear, and I wonder what the motives are when she—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I too wonder what the motives are when I hear a response like that. There were 12 meetings held where the girders were discussed between December 14 and when the Premier said the minister's office staff was briefed on the safety of the girders.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Education.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yesterday, the Premier said there wasn't sufficient information to make definitive recommendations on safety. The Premier is saying two separate things: Either they were discussing the safety of the girders or they weren't. The evidence says they were.

When will the Premier put public safety and accountability ahead of her political interests and come clean about our government's mismanagement on the largest infrastructure project in the history of the province?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We're back to NDP geography. I get asked where the questions are every time we're close to an election. This is nothing but an attack on myself, the member for Windsor West, and it's a thinly veiled political game. The deputy minister has told you, sir, you're wrong. The project manager, sir, has told you that you are inaccurate and wrong. Every engineer in

two ministries has told you, sir, you're wrong. What you are saying is not accurate. It is so inaccurate it is smearing my reputation, that of officials, and people in Windsor. You owe my deputy, you owe the people of Windsor an apology and I will have no truck with you until you stand up and apologize and be the honourable gentleman I think you are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Methinks think the minister protests too much. The Premier has said there will be no costs passed on to the taxpayers. As we learned from the gas plant scandal, what this government says about costs can't be trusted. As time went by, the price tag went up. Will the Premier keep her promise on transparency and tell Ontarians the real cost and liabilities they're facing over the mismanagement of the Herb Gray Parkway?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My deputy ministers, my officials, don't have the privilege to speak out. They are silent because they are public servants. The professionals who work on this are silent because they are that. The interim manager of the project says the problems are nothing one wouldn't expect with a large scale project. Connector bearings are being tested by an MTO-approved manufacturer. He has said 17 times, I think, on the public record that there is not an iota of safety concern. There haven't been any concerns that weren't properly remediated.

This isn't an attack on me. This is interesting, coming from the third party, smearing public servants and smearing the working people who build this project. He knows what he's saying is not true. One has to wonder why he keeps saying it. There is only one motive when you are at difference with the facts, and that is attacking people's reputations who can't criticize you. That's tabloid journalism, and I never thought they practised that at the CBC.

1100

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Government correspondence shows that the Ministry of Transportation did not want the girders to be installed until safety concerns were addressed and Ontario standards were met. On the other hand, Infrastructure Ontario wanted to press ahead regardless, because they didn't want a one- or a two-month delay.

My question is to the Premier. Knowing what the Premier knows now about the girders, does the Premier have confidence in the way Infrastructure Ontario looked after the provincial interest?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Oh, sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The question is directed to the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Again, I would ask the member to apologize, because what he just said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hold on, hold on. I'm hearing some things I don't like to hear, and it will stop.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will try this one more time, Mr. Speaker: It would be nice, the next time you get one of those very generous briefings that my ministry staff have given you, and when you're sitting in that room, you might want to apologize to them, because your party is supposed to be concerned about working people; your party is supposed to respect the integrity of the public service. That is certainly not consistent with what you're saying.

You do not understand the difference between a compliance issue, as much as assistant deputy ministers and officials have explained this to you, and it has been in your own local paper—you continue to contradict them, like you're some sort of expert. You're not, sir, an expert. You are out of your depth and you are saying things that aren't accurate and you're saying things that are hurting people's reputations who cannot answer you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In a subsequent email, to which I've just referenced, a senior vice-president at Infrastructure Ontario suggests comments made by Fausto Natarelli—a man, by the way, whom I've known for many years, a public servant, a man of great integrity whom I have great respect for. The guy from Infrastructure Ontario says that comments made by Mr. Natarelli are not productive, to which Natarelli says back to the VP at Infrastructure Ontario and responds with: "Not engaging us fully so that we can effectively discharge our role in regard to provincial standards ... is not productive."

Speaker, why on earth did the Premier ever sign a contract that negotiated away the ministry's ability to take immediate action to resolve any issue of public safety and warranty guarantees over the life expectancy for the construction materials on the Herb Gray Parkway?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't like to talk about individual members of the public service. We have a long tradition of not doing that. But I will tell you, I know the gentleman in question. If you were doing your homework and you talked to him—ask him what his relationship with the minister was and ask him what happened in that meeting on June 19. Ask him, because, Mr. Speaker, the statement the member from Windsor—Tecumseh made just confirmed to me that he actually is saying things, that if he's talked to him, he knows even more than that's not true.

Mr. Speaker, I find this offensive. I wish he would apologize. He continues to say things and quote people, that if he's actually talking to them, he knows that on June 19—because that gentleman was in the room and he can tell you everything, sir. I am most profoundly disappointed that you don't actually come here with the accurate information that you should have.

This project is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, sorry. Final supplementary; you're right. It's the final supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The correspondence I referenced was on February 14, a long time before June 19, Minister.

Speaker, since this contract was signed on the Herb Gray Parkway, this government has authorized billions of dollars in other projects. The private contracts for these are modelled after the same contract Premier Wynne authorized on the troubled Herb Gray Parkway.

If the Premier refuses to answer questions on the mismanagement of the Herb Gray Parkway, how can we trust her, or how can the people in this province trust her, to lead the province's transit and infrastructure file?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, this is a great project and a great opportunity for the people of Windsor. The memos that front-line staff made, I have read every one of. Every single one, I have read, but I read them after I was advised there was a problem. The gentleman will tell you that, and the gentleman will tell you he has pretty great things to say about this minister, quite frankly, sir, and you know that.

My deputy does not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The reason I know that, Mr. Speaker, is because Mr. Natarelli was appointed by me and the deputy to oversee the project from that point of June 19 on. That's why I know, because he and I worked very closely on this project all last summer. I believe you know that, because he was the first person to come in in interim oversight, and it was his work that helped us do that. He will tell you that the first time he talked to me about that was on June 19—first time. He will tell you that. That is why I know this project is safe—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last year you chose to vote against the Fair and Open Tendering Act, which would have stopped the region of Waterloo from becoming locked into a construction monopoly. At the time, you excused your inaction by saying the region could apply to the labour board to become a non-construction employer. But I told you a year ago that that application process was broken.

Well, guess what? The labour board rejected the region's application recently because—wait for it—it fixed a toilet handle at an addiction centre and installed a sign at a bus terminal.

Premier, will you actually show some leadership today, admit you were wrong and agree to fix the Labour Relations Act so that we can guarantee open tendering for public employers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I appreciate the question. I do understand that the Ontario Labour Relations Board has made a few preliminary decisions in this regard, dealing with the Carpenters' Union and the regional municipality of Waterloo. We received the most recent decision, and the ministry is in the process of reviewing it right now.

But, Speaker, as you know, the OLRB is an independent, quasi-judicial tribunal. There are outstanding issues with respect to this matter that are currently before the board. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specifics of this case, but it's important to note that if a municipality is unsatisfied with a ruling of the OLRB, with the board's decision, they are able to reapply for classification as a non-construction employer at any time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the Premier: Premier, if you fail to take action on this file—

Interjection: She's not even listening.

Mr. Michael Harris: —thousands of tradespeople will be barred from working on publicly funded infrastructure in Waterloo region.

Premier, I hope you're listening to this, because it will be an election issue in our region and across the province, so you should at least respect my taxpayers in the community and listen to this question.

I don't know about you, but I know I can speak for those of us on our side of the House when I say that closed tendering is unfair, unjust and flat-out wrong. The vast majority of Ontarians believe that every qualified company and worker should have the right to bid and work on public infrastructure. That's why open tendering has the support of unionized contractors, open shop companies, and municipalities from across the province.

So, Premier, listen—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm listening.

Mr. Michael Harris: No, you're not. I will ask you again: Will you show some courage, admit you are wrong and agree to fix the Labour Relations Act so that we can guarantee open tendering for public employers?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I do thank the member for the supplementary. Once again, I will note that if a municipality is unsatisfied with a board's decision at any time, they have the right to reapply. Others have done that in the past. Non-construction employer classification was granted, for example, to the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator.

1110

But what I really want to concentrate on in my answer is: How did these rules get in place? Where did they come from? Who brought these rules into place? The rulings that are being made by the OLRB in this case are based on rules that were brought in by the official opposition and refined further by the official opposition. So if they made a mistake on the rules, Speaker, I can understand them being upset about this. But it's their rules. They made the rules. That's what's being voted on today.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, court documents allege that Liberal cabinet ministers had their homes cleaned for free as part of an elaborate government kickback scheme for government cleaning contracts.

Premier, which Liberal cabinet ministers had their homes cleaned for free as part of this kickback scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the government House leader will want to speak to this from his ministry's perspective, but the member needs to know that our government took the allegations around this issue very seriously in 2010—that there were irregularities. As soon as the OPS discovered that there were irregular financial transactions, they initiated an internal audit. The information gathered from the audit was shared with the OPP, and an investigation was launched.

On December 20, 2010, the OPP laid charges against three government employees and an employee of a facility management company. The process was shared with the public in an open OPP news release on December 20, 2010. So this was a police investigation that was dealt with and was drawn to a legal conclusion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you're right. It is another OPP investigation, in which documents say that in fact what happened was, as part of the scheme, Liberal cabinet ministers had their houses cleaned for free.

So I'm going to ask you the question yet again. Premier, which of your ministers or former ministers had their houses cleaned for free?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy, come to order, and the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, I have great respect for the House leader of the NDP, but this is really out of character for him. This is really beneath him.

We're talking about a situation that was the topic of media stories in 2010. There is absolutely nothing new here. The individuals who undertook wrongdoing were charged.

Let me read a quote from the OPP that was in the paper this morning. OPP Sergeant Carolle Dionne said

the following: "All of the names on the list were reviewed.... There was no wrongdoing, no fraud, no (criminal) breach."

Four individuals were charged. Anyone else who was somehow implicated or linked to this has been totally cleared. There is nothing new here and, quite frankly, this is beneath the honourable member.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Speaker, a number of weeks ago, I had the privilege and honour of having the minister come and visit the riding. We visited Ivaco, which is a major employer in L'Orignal, Ontario, and we announced an investment where we're going to help to retain and create 458 jobs.

We then visited Alexandria Moulding in my hometown. We toured that facility, and we're helping them, as well, to retain and create 353 jobs.

Further to that, we also made announcements about Montebello Packaging, where we're going to retain and create 86 jobs; and Skotidakis goat farm, a Greek yogurt maker, which is growing right across the province and North America—we're helping to create and retain 110 jobs.

Minister, I know that last week you joined the Premier and Mr. Milloy to announce a multi-billion-dollar investment in other communities such as Kitchener and Waterloo, so I'm just asking if you could update us with the details of those announcements.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member is correct. Last week, I had the pleasure of joining the Premier and my colleague from Kitchener Centre to announce an unprecedented investment by OpenText, one of the world's largest and most successful technology companies, operating in 33 countries around the globe.

This is a significant partnership for the province. OpenText will be investing up to \$2 billion in its Ontario operations, making our province its R&D hub globally for cloud computing technology, the future of the Internet. This is great news. This partnership will create up to 1,200 new jobs, doubling the company's Ontario workforce, and these jobs will be high-paying ICT jobs.

This investment is also going to pay great dividends to the province. Our \$120-million investment will directly benefit the province, with over \$200 million in tax revenues alone. And most importantly, this partnership will help to guarantee the success of this sector for years to come and keep Ontario at the forefront of the world's most exciting innovations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that great news. The tech and manufacturing sectors in my riding and across the province will continue to benefit from our government's commitment to this sector, because we're making smart strategic partnerships with industry. This announcement demonstrates our plans to create jobs and grow the economy.

Speaker, this government has many positive and successful measures we've taken to create good-paying jobs across this province, but the party opposite has come out with name-calling and harming the relationships we have with our industry partners. I find it appalling that the leader of the official opposition actually calls our investments in our businesses and industries "corporate welfare."

As a matter of fact, the PC candidate in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell said it was a shame that we gave \$1 million, or partnered with \$1 million, to St-Albert's cheese, when we all know that St-Albert's went through some very difficult times over the last year.

Speaker, through you back to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment: Can the minister elaborate on how we're keeping Ontario competitive in this sector?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, one of the key priorities for our government is creating good-paying jobs for today and tomorrow. We've seen this with the landmark \$4-billion Cisco announcement last December. It's the province's talented workforce, our research infrastructure and competitive business climate that are attracting these top companies that are choosing to invest here as a result.

It's refreshing to know that some members from the party opposite are getting it, or at least former members. To quote the former member from Thornhill, Peter Shurman, when he was asked why the government partnered with OpenText, he said it's necessary because "[We're] in a competitive race. That's why." The former PC finance critic went on to say that "there are things that even Conservatives have to do... If we're going to get a \$2-billion investment from a company that operates in 33 jurisdictions, that \$120 million will alleviate any concerns ... of other jurisdictions coming to the fore—it's a good thing."

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, yesterday, Mr. and Mrs. McEwen were here at Queen's Park. My constituent Jim McEwen suffered a stroke in 2010, at the age of 55. He spent a few weeks in hospital in rehab, and on discharge, he asked the question, "What's next?" He was told, "You're done."

Jim McEwen and his family have been paying, with their own money, thousands of dollars over the past four years to partake in post-stroke physiotherapy.

Minister, you denied Mr. McEwen and other Ontario citizens OHIP-funded physiotherapy because of their age. This is simply wrong.

Minister, in your Ontario today, post-stroke patients over 19 and under 65 are not entitled to OHIP-funded physiotherapy. This is shameful. Minister, will you address this discriminatory policy and provide OHIP-funded physiotherapy for all qualified post-stroke patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a spend'' question, and we know very well that the party opposite wants to cut spending.

Speaker, we do have services that are available to senior citizens, to people 65 and over, including drug benefits, for example. I'm wondering if the member opposite wants to extend drug coverage to everyone as well, which I think would be a great idea but would cost some money.

When it comes to physiotherapy services, we do cover people 19 and up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —we do cover people 65 and over, and we do cover people who have had a hospitalization. We are expanding access to physiotherapy right across the province, including in the member opposite's own community. We're expanding access to home-based physiotherapy, to clinic-based physiotherapy. This is absolutely a move in the right direction, providing better care for patients and better value for our money.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1120

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, my question is really a matter of fairness, and I wish you would put it in that context.

I've petitioned you and written you over the past four years on this issue. This is about justice. Mr. McEwen was here yesterday with his wife, Lorraine. They're asking you for help to allow Mr. McEwen to receive OHIP-funded physiotherapy so he can return to work as a professional engineer and a productive member of society.

Minister, will you address this unfairness issue and extend OHIP-funded physiotherapy to all qualified post-stroke patients, not based on discrimination of age—over 19 and under 65? Will you do this today? It's about fairness.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to know that the PC caucus now supports the expansion of health care services.

Everything you talk about is about cutting services, and when we took the move to expand services to people through reforms in physiotherapy, the members opposite opposed our expansion of physiotherapy. They opposed the expansion of exercise programs and falls prevention programs for the people of this province.

We are making investments to keep people healthier and out of hospital, and I'm delighted to know you're now with us on that.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. The cost of electrifying the GO line from Kitchener-Waterloo to Toronto is pegged at \$900 million, and the cost of two-way, all-day GO services is estimated at nearly \$5 billion. But your minister claims that he can deliver a 200-kilometre train route with bullet trains at 320 kilometres an hour at the bargain-basement price of \$500 million—the same cost as a 36-kilometre BRT route from Scarborough to Durham.

After years of turmoil in transit, transportation and infrastructure, people in this province deserve honest numbers. Does the Premier think this is a credible promise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is going to want to speak to the details of the plan, but I want to just say to the member opposite that I think this is a very exciting plan. I think it is necessary, and I know that the member opposite has been at announcements and events in her community where she has heard from people, particularly in the high-tech community, who very much want that connectivity between the Kitchener-Waterloo region and the GTHA. That is exactly what they are looking for.

I hope that the question—which at least is a question about investment in the future and in transit—indicates that the party opposite will take a very close look at the budget when we bring it in, because those investments in transit and in transportation infrastructure are core to our plan for economic growth in the province. I look forward to their support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, Madam Premier, it is the best plan in the galaxy, because what Liberals will promise, what we know they'll promise—they'll promise anything and everything to get elected. In order to save a few Liberal seats in the GTA, you promised to cancel gas plants. You said it would cost nothing, but we know the truth now.

Now they're worried about seats in southwestern Ontario. They're making a promise for a bullet train that, to quote the minister, will cost \$500 million "after revenues over the next 10 ... years." The proposed HS2 high-speed train in the United Kingdom will run half the number of trains, but it will cost \$29 billion. That's a difference of 5,800%.

Is the Premier saying to Ontarians that they are getting a deal that's nearly 6,000% better than the one in the United Kingdom?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I greatly appreciate what I think is a very honest question from the member, and I'm happy to answer the question.

There are two projects here. There is the regional express rail project, which is the two-way, all-day GO service being run by Metrolinx, which will run to Guelph and to Kitchener. Those are electrified trains running every 15 minutes. Much of that expenditure has already been absorbed. I think we own 80% of the track, and Metrolinx is now working on that. That's part of the Metrolinx program.

The study—and they're not my numbers. I'm not an expert at this; they're not my numbers. The numbers are—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: If you want the answer, then listen. I'll give you the answer right now. She has a right to an answer.

The estimates from FCP from Britain, who designed that—world-leading experts, First Class Partnerships—is that it is a project that will cost \$2 billion to \$3 billion to upgrade to London and to add that track and net of revenues—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I am particularly happy to rise on this First Responders Day to ask this particular question to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending an announcement with the Premier, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services at which we announced that we would be extending protections for firefighters across Ontario.

Speaker, as you may know, last May, I brought forward Bill 81, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Presumptions for Firefighters), which called for the government to add six additional cancers to the existing eight that are presumed to be work-related by the WSIB. This is an issue that's very important to the members of my local firefighters' association in Vaughan. It's something that I've worked on closely with current president Jason McInnis and former president Mike Doyle.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please speak further to this new regulation?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd be very, very happy to, but first, let me thank all the first responders that have joined us at Queen's Park today and all across this great province. I'd particularly like to thank the member from Vaughan, not only for this question in the House but for his excellent advocacy on this issue over the past months. We know that every day firefighters risk their lives to protect us and our communities. We've got to protect them in return.

We're building on the eight cancers that we already presume, and we're making it even easier for full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters and fire investigators to qualify for benefits. Our new regulation applies retroactively to January 1, 1960. It's immediately going to add breast cancer, multiple myeloma and testicular cancer to the list, with an additional three to be phased in: prostate cancer in 2015, lung cancer in 2016 and skin cancer in 2017. This is the right thing to do. I was so proud to be a part of that yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for his response and for being there yesterday with all of the folks who were at the announcement. There are approximately 450 fire departments in the province of Ontario, made up of about 11,000 full-time firefighters, 19,000 volunteer firefighters and 200 part-time firefighters. I am very, very thrilled to be a member of a government that is working hard to protect these vital members of our communities.

This expanded list of presumptive illnesses will make a huge difference in the lives of firefighters across Ontario, lifting the burden of proof from their backs when they need it most.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please tell us a bit more about the regulation and what our government is doing to further protect firefighters in Ontario?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks again for the question to my colleague. This regulation recognizes the years of service of firefighters. It makes Ontario one of the leading jurisdictions in all of Canada.

You know, it lit up the Twittersverse last night. While we were standing by these courageous men and women, the PC candidate in Eglinton–Lawrence was tweeting that firefighters in this province are a special interest group that can be bought. While the PCs were busy denigrating heroic firefighters across social media last night, let's hear what the firefighters themselves had to say. Mark McKinnon, president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, applauded our move and said it's going to "allow firefighters and their families to focus on getting better instead of struggling to get WSIB benefits for an illness that could have been contracted years earlier."

John Sobey, vice-president of the Ottawa Firefighter Association: "These things take time but good things come to those who wait and we're most happy for families of the fallen firefighters."

On this side of the House, we respect the lifesaving work of Ontario's firefighters.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Since a transformer was installed in 2006 to service industrial wind turbines in my community, residents have been trying to get numerous issues resolved, including noise and health concerns. Residents and the municipality have been regularly reporting these issues to the MOE Spills Action Centre. Do you agree that one of your responsibilities as the Minister of the Environment is to resolve issues related to environmental concerns, including monitoring emissions from transformer stations through the spills reporting centre?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: Our ministry, of course, works very hard to resolve all issues which are of an environmental nature, including issues right across the province of Ontario. They may relate to air quality; they may relate to noise; they may relate to water quality. I know that ministry officials work very hard to resolve these matters. There are times when people are going to be in disagreement with whatever results are achieved at that, and I certainly respect the fact that some people are not going to agree with conclusions that are reached.

We have these mechanisms in place for people to access the Ministry of the Environment in order that they may deal, as expeditiously as possible, with these issues within the legislation, within the regulations, within the policy precepts of the province of Ontario. Certainly our ministry strives to be very helpful to the people of this province, and I'm sure that they will continue to do so well into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm glad the minister understands his responsibilities, but I don't understand why the Whitworth family has been told by your ministry that their concerns are irrelevant, and they don't care about their issues.

On one occasion, when the Whitworths asked how they could lodge a formal complaint, they were told, "The ministry has closed your file and will not be taking any action on your complaints, and that no other agency, department or ministry was taking any steps to address or assume responsibility."

Your government has turned their backs on the Whitworths. My question, Minister, is simple: Now that you've decreed that the Whitworths' file is closed, where do you expect this family to go to resolve their issues?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I recognize that there are going to be—I think, as I alluded to in my initial response—people who are going to be ultimately disagreeing with the conclusions that are reached by not only the Ministry of the Environment, but other ministries, particularly when the particular assertions have been made on many occasions, and responses have been given.

I recognize as well, that people are not always going to be happy with the response. They will get a response and they will continue to pursue issues, as is their right to pursue issues. However, there will come a time, from time to time, where the answer that the ministry has given is an answer that, unless there is new information which is provided, unless there's additional information that's provided, the ministry will ensure that it gives the appropriate answers. I know there are other mechanisms that are available, but I must say, we do reach a circumstance—and former environment ministers who sat on the other side of the House would fully understand that.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Long-term construction projects kicked off this week on the Gardiner Expressway, resulting in lane restrictions until 2016. Families will see their commute times increase dramatically in the GTA, with no access to viable transit alternatives. We should be making Brampton into a transit hub, but the minister can't even deliver two-way, all-day GO service.

Why is the minister content to continue the Liberal record of delay, when Brampton needs transit relief now?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, I hope the member knows that the Gardiner is a municipal infrastructure run by the city, of which I think his party has a large

number of members, so I'm hoping he's in discussion with his municipal caucus friends at Toronto city hall. As someone who lives beside the Gardiner, I would appreciate—and I wish him well in those discussions, because I live a half a block from the Gardiner and the Lakeshore, which for some peculiar reason, in some act of brilliant transportation, were both closed at the same time, which has created some interesting discussions in my neighbourhood.

We have a \$50-billion investment in the Big Move. The Premier just announced an additional, unprecedented \$29-billion fund. We're extending the 427, the 407; we're making massive investments in rapid transit in Viva with York and with other regions.

I hope the party will support the budget later today, because this is a historic, unprecedented level. If the member does have those concerns, which I take him at his value, I hope you will be rising with us several times in the next few days.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: As my constituents and I can attest, construction on the Gardiner has increased commute times by almost an hour. People need a viable alternative. We hear lots of empty promises from the Liberals, but there's still really no funding for all-day, two-way GO service.

The government has delayed important transit improvements in Mississauga and Brampton for too long. Why won't the minister commit to timelines and start the funding for these projects that Brampton needs, rather than spending his time making flashy announcements that Ontarians simply cannot trust?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we have a \$50-billion plan, which we are about \$17 billion into, and we're about five years into the 25 years. If you do the math, \$17 billion of a \$50-billion commitment at about year 5 means that we're way ahead of schedule.

We're now building more rapid-transit capital projects, including in your community, than ever before. It's unprecedented. These aren't announcements; these are results and actions that are going on right now across the province.

We would like to complete this project because right now, the last Premier who invested as much in rapid transit and transportation was George Drew, and he left office in 1969. We went through a 35-year drought where we never spent more than \$3 billion or \$4 billion. We spend more than that on highways alone. So we're back at 2% of GDP.

We think we share some views—we hope we do—with the NDP on the importance of infrastructure. I guess we'll find out, when the budget gets voted on, if that's true.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, l'honorable Deb Matthews.

Speaker, with your permission, I would also like to welcome to Parliament my colleagues, fellow members of the Ontario Medical Association, who are here in force for the annual Doctors' Day.

Today is an ideal time for us to recognize the thousands of physicians across Ontario who screen, test, diagnose, examine, palpate, auscultate, prescribe, monitor, advise, console and heal us through hundreds of illnesses, through the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.

It's been said that medicine is the most scientific art and the most artistic science. I know first-hand that Ontario physicians mobilize this wisdom every day. I know their dedication and commitment and energy and compassion.

My question is this: Minister, would you please share with this chamber some of your thoughts on how you value doctors—not merely the ones in caucus, but those across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly do value all doctors; including the three in our caucus, indeed, the three in this Legislature.

I welcome the OMA today. We are delighted to be celebrating Doctors' Day here. I want to say a big congratulations to Dr. Ved Tandan, the 133rd president of the OMA, and acknowledge the extraordinary work of Dr. Scott Wooder, who is the past president now of the OMA.

We have 26,000 doctors working in this province. They play a very central role, of course, in any attempt to reform our health care system. I'm pleased to say that Ontario's doctors have been great partners, and even more delighted that Dr. Tandan has made a priority of his presidency building stronger partnerships and building stronger bridges; so thank you for that, Doctor.

As we have worked to increase access to physicians across the province, doctors have been there with us. As we shifted our focus to patient-centred interdisciplinary care teams, doctors have been there with us. They've been there with us—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, yes. Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister, for your thoughts as well as your endorsement.

Speaker, as you will appreciate, doctors are committed to high-quality, timely and accessible patient care in communities across Ontario. Primary care physicians in particular are the gatekeepers and goaltenders of our health care system. Epidemics of cardiometabolic disease, type 2 diabetes, adult and childhood obesity, osteoarthritis, respiratory ailments like asthma and COPD, cancers—all these land on the desks of Ontario's family doctors. It is the family docs who must play the lead role in encouraging patients to live healthier lives, avoid disease triggers and monitor themselves.

Family docs are generally the first point of contact in the health care system when patients fall ill, yet I know there are many families in my own riding of Etobicoke—

North who are concerned about access to primary care. Would the minister please elaborate on her efforts at increasing equitable access to doctors in communities across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is right: We've made great efforts to train and recruit more doctors in Ontario and ensure that their services are available in the communities that need them.

I'm delighted to say that we have nearly 4,000 more doctors working in this province than we did just a decade ago. Our family health teams are providing care to over three million people.

We've created the HealthForceOntario's northern and rural recruitment and retention fund so there are more physicians attracted to small and northern communities, where they are often most needed.

In 2009, we launched Health Care Connect. It has helped a quarter of a million people who do not have a family doctor to find one.

There is more to do. I do want to say thank you to the doctors for supporting us as we have focused on wellness and prevention. As we have proposed legislation like the skin cancer protection act, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act and the Making Healthier Choices Act, Ontario doctors have been right there with us, supporting.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Will the Premier explain to the House why the government cancelled the Connecting Link Program, an historic partnership so vitally important to our municipalities like the township of Centre Wellington and the town of Halton Hills, without adequate notice or consultation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We actually have just done the MIII in the small, rural and northern programs, which is \$100 million. The Premier just announced an unprecedented fund of over \$14 billion for rural and northern Ontario.

My estimate: In any years when we've been in government, we have been spending \$5 to \$10 more than you did per person in rural Ontario, and we are working now and have had consultants to integrate all of those highways.

The other thing is, as you know, you downloaded 42% of the highways in eastern Ontario and took all of the provincial highways, and downloaded health and social service, just in case there was any chance that any municipal leader could find five cents for it.

We are uploading health and social services, and we are putting more money into rural roads and highways. So I'm hoping that that statement from my honourable friend—that you'll be supporting the budget, and you'll see that as some redemption for your government's record, which I'm sure—from your lips to God's ears—will give us both a place in heaven.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, nobody believes the minister anymore.

To the Premier: By cancelling this historic partnership, the Premier is asking rural Ontario to pay the price for Liberal mistakes. West Perth needs to reconstruct the Blanchard Bridge at a cost of about \$1.7 million. Wellington North needs over \$1 million to repair the Rick Hopkins Bridge. These are provincial bridges on provincial highways, carrying provincial traffic.

Speaker, I'll ask the Premier to use her math skills. How many times could this government have fixed our bridges if it hadn't blown over a billion dollars on cancelled gas plants?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: These new funding initiatives are several-fold what the party in power started, when Premier Wynne was Minister of Transportation, through ROMA and through the Ontario Good Roads Association. We started these new programs; they were written in partnership; and we very carefully listened to rural leaders across Ontario. As a matter of fact, the government has been so principled that over 86% of all the funds in these programs go to opposition ridings.

So I don't understand. I would hope that the person opposite—if the member from Perth—Wellington is so concerned about this, he might want to apologize to those rural leaders for all the downloading of health and social services and when you took all the provincial highways and dumped them on municipalities.

We are uploading and we have a fully funded program, and in the budget, you will see the continuing growth of that commitment. I hope that means that the member from Perth—Wellington has mended his ways and that his party will join us in supporting the budget.

DEFERRED VOTES**INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS
AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014****LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE
AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI
ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ**

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Milloy, and that the question be now put on the motion for second reading of Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members take their seats, please.

We have a deferred vote on the motion. Mr. Milloy has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Holyday, Douglas C.
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia

Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 59; the nays are 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

**INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS
AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014****LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE
AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI
ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ**

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On December 5, 2013, Mr. Murray moved second reading of Bill 141. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."
 All those opposed, say "nay."
 In my opinion, the ayes have it.
Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time, we are fulfilling a unanimous consent to give tribute to our first responders.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm honoured to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak, the leader of the official opposition, and my colleagues in the PC caucus. I know that I'll be joined by my colleagues here unanimously.

I had the privilege of bringing this bill forward, and, as members know, it was a complex process. What is, however, very encouraging is that ultimately this bill was passed because, unanimously, we as members agreed that it was the right thing to do.

It's appropriate that we would take a day when we would recognize the contribution that first responders make to our communities. There will be a memorial this weekend, and we will remember first responders who died in the course of fulfilling their duties.

I have participated, as many members have, over the last number of years. I now will have served—on June 9, if we get there—for 19 years. I know there are some members who are looking to know that I'm moving on.

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Minister of Health.

Over that time, I have had the honour to participate in those memorials. But what is important to me, and I believe all of us, is that we not only remember first responders who have died in carrying out their responsibilities, but that we remember them while they are with us and carrying out those responsibilities, that we celebrate what you do and we're appreciative of what you do. That's what this bill does.

The purpose of the legislation is so that we would raise awareness within our communities, starting here, as we're doing now, as members of the Legislature, to give honour and respect and celebrate. The objective was that throughout this province, that whether at municipal level, or whether in our schools and auditoriums, throughout our communities, that we would come together—people would come together—pause, take this day and say, "Thank you. We appreciate what you do for us. We appreciate the safety and security that we enjoy in our communities." That doesn't just happen by accident.

Speaker, we often take for granted these important services and the dedication, not only of the first responders,

but of their families as well. It's not an easy task to put yourself in harm's way day in and day out for the protection of people within our communities, so we're here celebrating that contribution.

One of the initiatives that I undertook to try to spread that news was to initiate an essay contest in our schools. I contacted both school boards in Newmarket and Aurora and York region and asked to have students participate and write an essay to say what first responders mean to them and to our communities.

I'd like to read into the record one of those essays that was received, because I believe that this really goes to the heart of what we are trying to achieve with this day. It's entitled "Heroes," by Tattiana Pancho in grade 11 at Sacred Heart Catholic High School:

"In 2009, I had a brain aneurysm which" led "to a stroke. I had a bleed in the right side of my brain. I was left-side-paralyzed and had to learn how to walk and talk all over again.

"I was with my father when I felt a weakness in my knees. My hero, my father, a Toronto police officer, went into emergency mode. His action saved my life. He called 911 and the emergency medical services unit came out.

"My heroes, the ambulance attendants, were quick and thorough. They got me to the hospital, by which time I was in a coma.

"My heroes, the emergency staff, doctors, nurses and administrative team worked diligently to ensure my safety. The doctors requested air transport to the SickKids; organizing this would take three to six hours.

"My dad, Superman to me, called his unit. His unit command called York Regional Police and they came to his rescue, my rescue." They "blocked traffic and got me to SickKids with moments to spare. I was then rushed into surgery.

"My heroes, the doctors and nurses at the Hospital for Sick Children.

"My heroes, the police officers who keep us safe; firefighters, who are not only there if there is a fire but are called out to motor vehicle accidents to assist with the jaws of life or simply to get your pet out of a tree; the EMS team who works against time to get patients to the hospital; the administrative staff in hospital, the first contact in a hospital visit; the doctors and nurses who fight the odds constantly to ensure survival.

"I am here to tell my story because of the amazing work of first responders.

"First responders—911 operators, police, fire, ambulance ... my heroes."

I want to thank Tattiana Pancho for her essay and her insight.

In closing, I want to give very special recognition to someone who was very instrumental in me bringing this bill forward, and that is Vali Stone, who is with us. I would ask her to stand.

1200

Vali Stone is the author of a book entitled 911: True Tales of Courage and Compassion. Vali came to my office and gave me that book, and it recounts the stories of first responders whom Vali asked to share the most

memorable times that they've had in carrying out their duties. I commend that book to all members. In fact, when I first introduced this bill, I made that book available to all members here. I believe it's something that everyone in this province should read.

Again, in closing, Speaker, I just want to express our sincere appreciation for the work that our first responders do. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Our province and our communities are what they are because of the work that you do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Next tribute, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, it is my great privilege to rise in this House today on behalf of my Premier, my colleagues in the government caucus and the people of Ontario to recognize and express our gratitude to our first responders.

First responders provide emergency services in times of crisis. Every day, our first responders put their lives on the line to protect us, our friends, neighbours and loved ones. They are there when we need them most and look after us in our time of need. We are always confident that Ontario's first responders are ready at a moment's notice to protect our homes, businesses and communities.

To recognize their ongoing commitment to community safety, the Ontario Legislature proclaimed May 1 of each year as First Responders Day. I especially want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for championing this very important initiative.

First responders include police officers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors and emergency managers. They also include the many volunteers and professionals who dedicate their careers to the service of others.

Emergency service providers are important members of our communities. They are also our neighbours, friends and relatives. Speaker, I'm very proud to note that my late grandfather, Ghulam Abbas Naqvi, was a police officer.

Our first responders help people in times of crisis, but we also want to recognize their volunteer work, which helps strengthen our communities. From charity events to toy drives, community car washes and coaching little league, our first responders are a positive example for our youth and for everyone in our communities.

I was pleased to join Premier Wynne, Minister Kevin Flynn and MPP Steven Del Duca yesterday to announce that our government is improving supports for firefighters across Ontario. We're increasing cancer coverage to make it easier for firefighters with cancer associated with their work to qualify for workplace insurance benefits. It's the right thing to do to help protect those who protect us.

We know that Ontario families and communities are safer thanks to the dedication of our first responders, who are there to help us when we need them most. They make a difference every day in communities across our great province. They help us feel safe and protect us during emergency situations.

I also want to recognize the sacrifice of their families, their partners, their mothers, fathers and their children.

Thank you for sharing your loved ones with us and putting them in the line of harm.

Speaker, we also want to take the opportunity to pay our respects to those who lost their lives in the line of duty. Working with firefighters and police, we created an annual tribute to honour those who have died in the line of duty. This weekend, the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation will hold its annual ceremony of remembrance at Queen's Park here in Toronto. The names of fallen officers are inscribed on the wall of honour. Let's all take a moment to reflect on their courage and dedication.

Heroes are defined by the way they live their lives, serving their communities and protecting those in harm's way. To the families of those who have given their lives to protect others, we owe you an eternal debt and we keep the memory of your loved ones in our hearts and minds so that they may never be forgotten. Ontarians are privileged to be protected by our first responders. We are grateful for their dedication, their public service and their commitment to duty and service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final tribute.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to stand in the company of such heroes here today. Certainly on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the entire New Democratic Party caucus, the most important words we can say to you today are: Thank you.

It was in that spirit that our leader, Andrea Horwath, first tabled a bill about presumed diagnosis for certain varieties of cancer, and we are delighted that the government has picked up on that and brought that to bear and brought it into reality. That's a very good thing. As the Premier herself said, "It doesn't matter where good ideas come from."

On February 27 we, in the NDP, tabled a bill for presumed diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder for those who rush into danger when we rush out. This is critical. In fact, it's law in Alberta and has been law in Alberta for over two years now. What they've discovered is that there's no increase in the number of claims or cases; it's just that those claims and cases are dealt with with dignity, the way our first responders should be dealt with—with dignity—even when they succumb to post-traumatic stress disorder, which happens and which also results in death, on occasion. They also found in Alberta that it doesn't cost any more for municipalities. These are facts based on evidence of actually working with the law for over two years now.

On that day, we had in this House the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Paramedic Association, Tema Conter Memorial Trust, OPSEU, Unifor, CUPE and ATU, all in support of Bill 67. Most notably, though, I think, were the stories of the individuals who were suffering—Jeff Balch, firefighter; Bruce Kruger, Ontario provincial policeperson; David Whitley, paramedic—very brave individuals who came and told the stories of what it was to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, to try to get a claim through WSIB and often to fail in that pursuit.

We also heard from WSIB workers themselves who said they wished that they had the tools to process these claims in a dignified and honourable way, rather than look for every excuse not to process them. So that is what this bill does.

I believe that just like first responders would never say never to us, in terms of protecting our safety, we should never say never to them. I don't believe for a moment that this is a partisan issue. I have heard some negative rumblings from both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives, but I don't believe that. I don't believe that there's a person in this room who doesn't want what's best for our first responders.

So it is in that spirit that I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I could have your indulgence, please. I'm going to ask the member—and I stopped the clock—to provide the rest of her statement. If she's finished, that's fine. And then I will entertain that after, because we're in the middle of a unanimous consent to do the work that we're doing now. So, if you would like to complete your statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely. I just want to give credit where credit is due and say that it was the member from Newmarket–Aurora who made this suggestion. When the reading happened for Bill 67, it was his suggestion that it pass today, on May 1. But it was also the suggestion of hundreds of paramedics, firefighters and police officers who also sent us their wishes that this pass today, including the unions that I enumerated.

So, at this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my statements and then move unanimous consent. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. We are now finished that unanimous consent, and I will entertain the member from Parkdale–High Park on a point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. DiNovo is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder. Do we agree?

I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome students and teachers from First Nations School in my riding. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss an important issue right across the province of Ontario. I know that there are many schools that have, in the course of the last few years, closed right across the province of Ontario.

There is a process that is in need of review; it's called the ARC process that every school board goes through. I want to note that we on this side of the House have some concerns about the process and how it's unfolding in cities and communities right across the province, whether it's in Niagara Falls, Hamilton, Peterborough, or even in my own riding.

There is a school in my riding, St. Brigid school, that is a temporary school that was supposed to be built for about 15 years, and it was supposed to be replaced by a permanent school. I think residents in my community of Cambridge have asked what process has to actually be undertaken to replace that temporary school with a permanent structure.

I would ask that the members of this Legislature embark on a review process of the entire infrastructure plan in the Ministry of Education so that people are aware of how we can keep our schools open. In rural areas, particularly, where schools are closing because of declining enrollment, we should come up with a plan to keep those schools open to the greatest extent possible.

I urge all members in this Legislature to stand up and consider that proposal.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Miss Monique Taylor: On Monday evening, it was my honour to take part in Hamilton's National Day of Mourning ceremony. Each year, on April 28, we mourn the tragedy of workers killed on the job, and we vow to prevent them from happening in the future.

Every day, men and women leave their home for work as they have done many times before, but sometimes they don't return. We owe it to them, their families and all workers to make workplaces as safe as they possibly can be. We owe it to them to make sure that workers who are injured on the job are not assigned to a life of poverty.

Instead, the WSIB has released draft policies for consultation that, if implemented, will deny benefits to many workers with permanent injuries. The effect of these policy changes would be that workers' injuries will systematically be blamed on pre-existing conditions. Pre-existing conditions would include factors that are simply part of normal aging.

The simple fact is that if a worker is injured at work, they deserve to be compensated for that. Just because they are older and are, perhaps, more prone to disability, should not mean that they are less entitled. How can we possibly justify putting a lesser value on people as they age?

I call on this government to kill the WSIB's proposed changes, and take another look at the sensible proposals put forward by Harry Arthurs in the 2012 report.

MEADOWVALE THEATRE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This past weekend, the community of Meadowvale got together to celebrate 25 years of community theatre at our Meadowvale Theatre, which is celebrating its anniversary—it opened at the end of April—with a three-day celebration. It is an important milestone in our western Mississauga community.

The three-day event was hosted by Billy Talent—a name that some members in this Legislature will know—a now-famous punk rock band that originated right in Meadowvale and got its start at the Meadowvale Theatre.

The Mississauga Arts Council partnered together with Limelight to organize a young talent show for the entire western Mississauga community to enjoy.

The celebration featured performances by young artists, activities, and was followed by a barbecue for families to come and take part in. The master of ceremonies was ward 9 councillor Pat Saito, who was herself involved in the original work that brought the Meadowvale Theatre to fruition.

The theatre has grown in popularity by featuring, in part, Mississauga's cultural and social identity, and we brought in a lot of big names. The event also demonstrates that Mississauga is not only proud to bring in existing names but to develop its own artistic talent right in the heart of Meadowvale.

On behalf of the province, I'd like to thank all the volunteers for the countless hours they spent putting in to making the Meadowvale Theatre's 25th anniversary a great achievement.

MARY JEAN WRIGHT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is my honour to rise today to recognize the life of Dr. Mary Jean Wright, a constituent from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex who recently passed away.

Dr. Wright has a long-established professional career in the field of child psychology. After her graduate studies at the University of Toronto and war service in Britain, where she worked on developing care for evacuated children, she returned to her alma mater, the University of Western Ontario, where she became the first female in Canada to chair a major psychology department. She has also held many leadership roles in a number of organizations, including the Canadian Psychological Association, the Ontario Board of Examiners, Huron University College, and as a non-American fellow of the American Psychological Association.

She has been recognized with many awards, including honorary degrees from four Canadian universities, the Ontario Psychological Association's Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology, the Ontario Psychological Foundation's Year of the Child Award, the

Association for Early Childhood Education Children's Service Award, the CPA's Gold Medal and a Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Medal. Recently, Strathroy's newest public school is being named in her honour for her lifetime of contributions.

Many generations will continue to benefit from her philanthropic support of academic research, theological studies and cultural endeavours.

I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to the Wright family, and thank her for her dedication and contribution.

YOUTH SUICIDE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Today, I want to raise a very serious and tragic issue facing many communities in my riding and across the north: youth suicides.

Mr. Speaker, it may appall you to learn that in some communities in this province, the youth suicide rate is 10 times the national average. One community in my riding with a total population of 420 people has seen seven youth suicides and 27 attempts in a 12-month period.

I want the members of the House to take a moment to reflect on that and apply that figure proportionately to the communities they know. There would be an uproar. No one would stand for it, yet in First Nation communities like Neskantaga, Webequie and Pikangikum, very little is done to address the causes of the despair that is felt in these communities.

For many Ontarians living in these communities, the despair is caused by deplorable living conditions, boil water advisories that have lasted for decades, lack of access to fresh food, overcrowded and mould-infested homes—and that makes the situation even more dire.

More needs to be done than fly-in, fly-out crisis intervention. Real changes need to be made to address these grossly substandard conditions, and we need to reach out to these communities just as we would to any other community in this province.

We need to act immediately to improve the conditions in these communities and protect the future of these talented young people and ensure that another life isn't lost.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we see the world through our eyes. In fact, 80% of learning comes directly through our vision. Good vision is a key determinant in a child's learning and development. It enables them to achieve their full potential and to succeed.

We know that routine eye examinations by either an optometrist or a physician are fully covered by OHIP for Ontarians under the age of 20. Despite this, approximately 86% of children do not get their vision tested before the age of six. One out of six children require vision correction, and 3% of children have a serious eye condition that requires treatment.

There are a number of initiatives, like the Eye See...Eye Learn program, the government's partnership with optometrists to raise awareness with families. As well, ophthalmologists and researchers are actively engaged in a number of studies and initiatives regarding effective and affordable vision screening for children.

As legislators, parents, grandparents, doctors and educators, this is an issue that should be a concern to us all. We all have a role to play.

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I would like to suggest that we, as MPPs, take the opportunity to communicate this important issue to families in our ridings. I have tabled a motion, number 71, to be debated here next Thursday, to encourage discussion and debate and to raise awareness on this important issue. I look forward to members' interest and participation.

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

Mrs. Jane McKenna: This past Saturday morning, families in my riding gathered for a special breakfast at St. Christopher's Cooperative Preschool on Guelph Line. Students and parents, past and present, were there for pancakes and syrup, true, but the sweetest aspect of this occasion was the celebration of the non-profit preschool's golden anniversary year.

Opened in September 1964, the preschool was started by the young mothers of St. Christopher's Anglican Church, along with the parish's Reverend Clarence Mitchell and founding teacher Grace Freckleton.

Just two or three dozen children attended St. Christopher's during that first year. Things were simpler then, as they were outside of the preschool orbit, but St. Christopher's has evolved surely and steadily over the last half-century. The role of technology is the most obvious measure of change inside the classroom. One thing that hasn't changed, however, is the deep commitment of the dedicated staff and parents, whose efforts make this preschool's operations possible.

The community-minded caring is matched by the host church, which coordinates valued food security programs and an inclusive outreach ministry.

I am always happy to applaud those who give of themselves to the community, and I am delighted to wish St. Christopher's Cooperative Preschool a fantastic 50th anniversary.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like once again to highlight a wonderful local initiative in my community that will save lives.

On Saturday, April 26, the Gloucester North Lions Club ran an organ donor drive hosted by Place d'Orléans, a large mall in Orléans. This was the second year they partnered with the Trillium Gift of Life Network to give local Ottawa-Orléans residents an opportunity to sign up as organ and tissue donors.

On Saturday, the team in which I participated registered 31 donors, bringing the Lions' total to 288 registered donors, 96% of their goal of 300.

As we all know, April was organ donor month in Ontario. In the past year, we saw Ontario's organ donor list grow by 232,000 as citizens registered their consent to organ and tissue donation. This brings the total number of registered donors in the province to 2.9 million people, and I'm proud of the contribution of members of my community.

The local effort was led by Lion Pierrette Woods, who is also a tissue recipient. She told me that without her transplant, she would not be able to take in her favourite activity: watching her grandchildren play hockey.

Also present were John Proulx, Judy Proulx, Daniel Trotter, Harry Jackson, Guy Savard, Gail Marcogielse, Linda Robar, George Davies, Ann Bourassa, Ken McDonald, Judy McDonald, Linda Kzuniarz, Janet Kennedy and Barbara Savard.

I would like to thank all the volunteers from the Lions Club and Trillium Gift of Life Network, as well as Place d'Orléans, for hosting this life-saving initiative.

I encourage all those who have not yet registered to take the two minutes out of their day to give the gift of life at www.beadonar.ca.

KINETTE CLUB OF LONDON

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this time to thank the Kinetite Club of London. For the last 14 years, they have hosted an essay contest for students in grades 5 and 6 in the London area. The topic of the contest this year was "Why I Am Proud to Be Canadian." The grade 5 school curriculum covers the different levels of government, and this fit well with the contest.

This year's grade 5 winner is from West Nissouri Public School. I would like to congratulate Ellen McDonald and would like to read some of her essay, as I have time.

"Proud to Be Canadian

"My name is Ellen McDonald and I am incredibly proud, and feel privileged, to live in the country we call Canada.

"Canadians have many amazing things, one of which is freedom. Our freedoms and rights have attracted people from across the world for plenty of reasons, such as peace. I am proud to say that Canada is an official member of the UN ... that aims to prevent war from breaking out. Others come for the equal rights, such as equality of men and women. In fact, Canada is known for its rich variety of cultures. Twenty per cent of all Canadians come from somewhere else. It makes me feel safe to know that boy or girl, black or white, or short or tall will be accepted. Kids have rights too! I have the right to go to school and to be treated fairly, just like everyone else. A very important freedom, in my opinion, is the freedom of speech. For example, if I said I don't really want Stephen Harper to be Prime Minister, I would not be whisked off to jail! As long as it's respectful, I can

speak my mind (and that means speaking a lot!). I am proud to say that I can count on my rights and freedoms to help me feel safe and loved....

"In conclusion, it's pretty clear I'm a proud Canadian, eh? I've told you about our freedoms, our climate, our inventors and our animals. We have clean air to breathe and a safe environment—what more could you ask for? You certainly couldn't ask for a better country as Canada has that position filled. *Au revoir!*"

Congratulations, Ellen.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce Daiene Vernile, who is sitting here in the east lobby, who is the nominated candidate in the riding of Kitchener Centre and will soon, after the next election—whenever that is—be taking the seat of John Milloy.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present the first report, 2014, from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Tabuns presents the committee report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Simply, I move adjournment of the debate, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Tabuns moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Mrs. Albanese from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

The committee recommends that Bill 20, An Act respecting the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board, be not reported.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition. Earlier today, I raised a question with the Minister of Health on this subject.

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" for their own treatment;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

These petitions come from all over Ontario. I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Gabriel.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have this petition from Porcupine, Timmins and Orléans. So here it is.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to give it to page David to bring to the Clerk.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Bob Delaney: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale du CECCE;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Speaker, this petition is signed by a number of people from eastern Ottawa, and particularly the community of Orléans. I'm pleased to sign it, as well, and send it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: “Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for

acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I affix my signature in full support.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mrs. Sheila O’Neil. She is the office manager of the Centre of Hope, MS Society, Sudbury chapter. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition. I affix my name to it and ask Kaia to bring it to the Clerk.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

Thank you. I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Zahra.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern, unmaintained portion of Groves Road, being in the north half of lot 20, concession 9, from reference point N86°36'30"W to reference point N89°51'40"W in Zealand township was not included in the original 1972 maps of the Zealand #3 local roads board that were published in the Ontario Gazette, nor does it lead to any residences or other interests, and it negatively impacts residents living alongside the eastern, legally recognized, portion of Groves Road;

"Whereas Zealand #3 local roads board (LRB) voted in favour of removing said northern section of Groves Road from their recognized LRB area at their 2012 annual meeting, before and during which they complied with all rules and procedures relating to the conduct of local roads board business and were told as much by then-present MTO senior municipal supervisor, Larry Wilcox; and

"Whereas the Thunder Bay regional office of the Ministry of Transportation has since refused to support this democratic and legitimate process, and has ordered the aforementioned northern section of road to remain part of the local roads board area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Minister of Transportation to uphold the democratic will of Zealand #3 local roads board by directing MTO bureaucrats to stop interfering with the democratic and legitimate affairs of the Zealand #3 LRB and remove from the LRB area the northern portion of Groves Road which is described as running through the north half of lot 20, concession 9, of Zealand township, from reference point N86°36'30"W to reference point N89°51'40"W."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to Katie.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I will give the petition to Brendan.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to the page.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's my honour, as MPP for London West, to present this petition on behalf of the people I represent. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support over 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I support this petition, affix my name and present it to page Meaghan to take to the table.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this and will pass it on to page Gabriel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for petitions has ended. Pursuant to standing order 58(b), this House stands recessed until 4 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1333 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2014 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2014

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Sousa has moved, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves the budgetary policy of the government.

I am going to ask for the indulgence of the House while the pages deliver their copies. I also remind members to keep your hands to yourselves and let them deliver, because they're trying to set the record.

I thank the members for their co-operation.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the 2014 Ontario budget.

Before I begin, I want to thank my colleagues in the House ...

As well as the officials at the Ministry of Finance ...

And Ontarians themselves ...

For all they've done to help bring this budget forward ...

This is a budget for Ontarians ...

By Ontarians ...

For a strong Ontario ...

With more jobs ...

More opportunity ...

And a more secure future.

This is a budget, Mr. Speaker ... that looks not only at the days ahead ... but also the decade ahead ...

And it lays out a plan ... one firmly founded on the needs and desires and dreams of Ontarians ...

To continue to build our province over the next 10 years ...

Beginning today.

Mr. Speaker, like all members of this House, I got my start outside the Legislature.

My early years were in Kensington Market ...

I grew up in a small business environment ...

My dad was a local wholesaler ...

He had a knack for making a sale ... seeing an opportunity ... and seizing it.

To help provide our family ... with a more secure future.

He wasn't alone ...

There were other small business owners in the neighbourhood ... just like my dad ...

Each trying to make a living ...

To provide for their families.

While looking out for others.

I learned a lot from these Kings of Kensington ...

They were the leaders of the day.

They learned the art of business ... by living it ...

They were competitive ... but they were also compassionate.

I'd like to thank my dad, who's here with us today. Stand up, Dad, and take a bow.

Applause.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Those street smarts of yesterday have helped prepare me for today.

So, Mr. Speaker, our 2014 budget is about competitiveness and compassion.

Opportunity and security.

Investing today ... for a better tomorrow.

It is a plan that is balanced ...

Shaped by experienced hands ...

And a government ... that works to build a more prosperous Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government's plan is threefold.

We will create jobs and grow the economy by investing in our people.

We will build modern infrastructure.

We will support a dynamic and innovative business climate.

Delivering this plan will take discipline.

It will take vision.

And it will take all Ontarians, working together, led by a determined government.

So, Mr. Speaker ... we will do our part.

We will make the right investments.

We will invest in those areas ... and only those areas ... that strengthen our competitive advantage, create jobs and provide vital public services for our families.

Our government is making Ontario's schools and hospitals the best in the world.

And our collaborative and collective energy, talent and resources as a government will continue to be spent creating opportunity and jobs.

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As part of this plan, our government also recognizes the need for appropriate restraint.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will stick to our plan to balance the budget by 2017-18.

But we will not go down the road of deep, reckless cuts to programs and services.

Where expenses can be cut, we will cut them.

Where services can be provided more efficiently, we will do so.

But what we will not do is sacrifice important programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the Ontario way.

Nor has it been ... nor will it ever be ... our government's way.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians share strong values.

We are competitive as well as compassionate.

Fair as well as responsible.

We believe—not just in building a tolerant society, but in something bigger: We believe in building a fair society.

A society that rewards effort with opportunity.

So when we look to government, we look for leadership that embodies those values.

And we reject leadership that does not.

Some believe they can deliver strong health care and education, by recklessly spending and increasing taxes that would undermine our economy.

Others think they can create a strong economy through deep, reckless cuts to health care and education.

Ontarians know that we need balance.

Only this government will keep health care and education strong while continuing to build a more vibrant economy.

Mr. Speaker, that is what leads to a stronger quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, the global recession is behind us.

But its effects remain with us.

Today, our economy is growing.

It's creating jobs ... and we want more ...

That is why it will take steady hands ...

And a balanced approach to ensure that there is more opportunity for every Ontarian.

This is not the time for radical or reckless ideas as brought forward by others.

Over the next four years, the economic rate of growth in Ontario will more than double.

Since the recessionary low in 2009, Ontario has created more than 450,000 net new jobs.

Last year alone, employment increased by 96,000 jobs.

And the unemployment rate has declined to 7.3%, well below the recessionary high of 9.4%.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario has outpaced the rest of the world in its recovery.

Global economic growth is set to improve in 2014, particularly in the United States.

Economists say that Ontario is well positioned for the next 10 years.

Our investments ... in skills and knowledge ... and in infrastructure ... and in business will support even higher growth.

And Mr. Speaker, the global economy is changing.

We have entered a new industrial age.

If we want to make Ontario a global powerhouse ...

It will take more than simplistic solutions and sound-bite economics as peddled by some.

A complex global economy demands that we adapt ... to seize new opportunities for Ontario families.

It means we need to continue growing ... to create new jobs for our workers.

It requires strong leadership ...

That brings all Ontarians ...

Of all regions ...

Of all walks of life ...

Of all families and backgrounds ... together.

It starts, Mr. Speaker, as it must ... with jobs.

In our new economy, there is fierce global competition for investments that create those jobs.

Ontario has built a reputation as a hub for global business.

It is ranked third in North America for foreign direct investment.

Our government has turned Ontario's business tax system into one of the most competitive in the world.

Since 2009, the marginal effective tax rate on new business investment has been cut in half.

This makes Ontario an even more attractive place to invest.

We are one of the most diversified economies in North America.

We will continue to support our key sectors ... including ...

Aerospace ...

Agri-food ...

Auto ...

Clean tech...

Financial services ...

Information and communications technology ...

Mining ...

And the entertainment and creative cluster.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the global aerospace sector is poised to grow significantly over the next 20 years ...

Our government is working to ensure that Ontario is ready to compete ...

We're supporting Centennial College as it partners with the private sector to train the next generation of aerospace workers.

This will ensure we have new and highly skilled graduates.

Mr. Speaker, we are also partnering with Communitech, a hub in the Waterloo region, that helps with the commercialization of innovative technologies.

This partnership will help create 7,000 new jobs in the high-tech sector.

Enhancing GO Transit in the region further supports thousands of good-paying jobs in the area.

Mr. Speaker, to help secure new investments, we are also creating a new \$2.5-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund.

Firms around the world look to Ontario because of our advantages ...

Including a highly skilled labour force and world-class infrastructure.

This 10-year fund will help attract new strategic investments in growing sectors.

Mr. Speaker, this is a competitive world, and we are competing to win.

Last year we introduced the Youth Jobs Strategy. This is helping young people find jobs, start their own business and gain valuable skills. We know a job early in life helps put young adults on a strong career track.

In the gallery today we have Cosmo Hosten. Ever since he was a kid, he wanted to work in the auto sector. Through the Youth Employment Fund he was able to find a job as a service adviser at Canadian Tire. He calls his new job a career. Good luck to you, Cosmo.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently more than 11,000 success stories just like Cosmo across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that our businesses have the opportunity to grow.

When I started my small business, I would wake up at night thinking about how to build the company ...

How to pay the rent ... how to make payroll.

And I know a lot of small business owners feel that way.

That's why we are introducing steps to lower costs and make our businesses even more competitive. That includes a new five-point business energy savings plan to give small businesses the tools they need to conserve energy, manage costs and save money.

We will also help larger businesses to reduce their electricity costs on new projects.

These changes mean that Ontario's electricity prices will be more competitive with those of our neighbours.

And that will mean Ontario companies can create new jobs ...

Mr. Speaker, Ontario has outpaced its infrastructure for decades.

Governments of all political stripes failed to make the necessary investments to unclog our highways, to give commuters more public transit options, and to ensure that our just-in-time economy runs on time.

Mr. Speaker, for the past 30 years, I have commuted from my home in Mississauga to work ...

And like so many others ... on jammed highways and trains ...

I experience the congestion.

While we have made major investments to improve public transit, there is much more to do.

We've built wider highways ... dedicated commuter lanes ... and better bridges.

We've added more GO trains ... with more cars ... and a service guarantee.

Now we need to position our province for the future.

The time has come for a plan that will improve not only the lives of Ontarians today, but also the lives of our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

We need to do more than just plan for what's around the corner, but also for what's down the road.

We need to think in far-reaching ways that will make life better for years to come.

It's time we embrace a new chapter, a bold new future for Ontario.

One that is rational and informed.

Not one dictated by simplistic and short-term thinking.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has announced a bold new plan—Moving Ontario Forward. This plan would dedicate two new funds to fight congestion and invest in roads, bridges and transit totalling \$29 billion.

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The first would help address congestion in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

The second fund would invest in those critical projects across the rest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we will take the politics out of planning.

Because whether you live in Caledon or Clarington ...

Windsor or Wawa ...

Or anywhere in between or beyond ...

It's time for a long-term public works plan ... that actually works for the public, all across the great province.

And only this government is committed to such a plan ...

Mr. Speaker, our investments will help our businesses get their goods to market faster.

It means they can grow their business and hire more people.

It will help Ontarians get to work, home and school more quickly and safely ...

And will be an immediate boost to jobs and economic growth.

And we will do this without raising income taxes on low- to middle-income earners, nor will we raise general corporate taxes, which would be extremely risky to our economy.

With interest rates at historic lows, our infrastructure in need, and the economy in need of a boost, this is the opportune time to make these investments.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we are investing over \$130 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years.

Whether it's light rail transit in Ottawa ...

Or the expansion of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay ...

Or a new hospital in London ...

Or roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects throughout the province.

This means an even better quality of life for our families.

Mr. Speaker, there are some things we are doing now that we will no longer do.

Government does not need to be a passive investor or a landlord.

While it made sense at the time to invest in General Motors to protect an important industry and safeguard good jobs ...

Owning shares of this company is no longer necessary.

By selling Ontario's shares of GM, we can reinvest taxpayer money into the Trillium Trust that would be dedicated to new infrastructure projects.

We will also look at maximizing and unlocking value from our other assets, including real estate and crown corporations, such as OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO.

That doesn't necessarily mean we will sell them, Mr. Speaker.

Unlocking the full value of these assets will include improving efficiency and enhancing their performance.

We will sweat their income statements.

We owe it to all Ontarians to extract more value for them as taxpayers.

And we will do this using experts.

The council conducting the review will be led by retiring TD Bank president and CEO, Mr. Ed Clark.

By reinvesting these funds, we will create jobs and build a stronger future.

Mr. Speaker, like so many, I have elderly parents. Like two thirds of today's Ontarians, my parents did not

have workplace pensions. Fortunately, they were able to save to protect their future.

But many today are not saving adequately for retirement.

Unless we take action now, future generations of retirees will be left with a lower standard of living.

So to help Ontarians be more secure in their retirement, our government is introducing the first-of-its-kind mandatory provincial pension plan to build on the CPP.

We have a duty and must do more to ensure that everyday people have adequate savings in their retirement years.

After a lifetime of work and a lifetime of contributing to the economy, retirees deserve better to maintain their standard of living.

Middle-class Canadians know that the current CPP is not adequate for their retirement.

They can see the gap between what they have and what they need.

We cannot live on \$12,500 a year, which is the maximum afforded by CPP, let alone the \$6,800 they receive on average.

But the federal government refuses to acknowledge what Canadians—and its own experts—are telling them.

The federal government argues that now is not the right time for a CPP enhancement. The Hudak PCs agree.

Mr. Speaker, if not now, when? If not us, who? Obviously, not them.

The analysis done so far—including by Canada's Department of Finance—shows that a CPP enhancement will have economic benefits.

And a new report, prepared by the former Governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, says that enhancing retirement savings now is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, higher retirement savings would make more capital available to invest in our economy.

And as governments look to address the national infrastructure deficit ...

This can be a useful source of funding that will help enhance productivity.

And ultimately, more jobs in the future ...

Furthermore, higher disposable income for retirees means less reliance on social programs.

So we must think long-term.

Inaction by the federal government on this important issue is unacceptable.

That's because the basic structure of the CPP has essentially not changed in 50 years, since 1966, when it was introduced.

For today's workers, the maximum annual benefit is not enough ... especially to the middle class.

So, Mr. Speaker, since the federal government won't lead, Ontario will lead by developing a made-in-Ontario solution.

Our plan would build on the strengths of the CPP ...

Our plan would enhance benefits for middle-income earners while keeping contribution rates low.

Our plan would provide a predictable stream of income in retirement while indexing benefits to inflation.

Our plan would require equal contributions shared between employers and employees at 1.9% each.

And our plan would aim for a replacement rate of 50% of an individual's earnings, up to \$90,000 ...

Mr. Speaker, when combined with the CPP, an individual with a 40-year career could replace up to 30% of his pre-retirement income ...

That means they could receive an annual lifetime benefit of \$25,000—roughly doubling the retirement benefit under the CPP.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan would be publicly administered at arm's length ...

It would have a strong governance model, with experts responsible for managing its investments.

Benefits would be earned as contributions are made to ensure that the system is fair, and younger generations would not be burdened with additional costs.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, those already participating in a comparable workplace pension plan would not be required to enrol ...

And we will reduce the burden on lower-income workers, similar to the CPP.

Our plan would be introduced in 2017 to coincide with the reductions in EI premiums as well, and contributions would be phased in over a period of two years.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Right Honourable Paul Martin for his insights as we developed this plan.

As well as the expertise provided to us by the technical advisory group on retirement income.

I am pleased to announce today that Mr. Michael Nobrega, a former CEO of OMERS, will chair our implementation committee. Michael, thank you.

And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that our plan to increase retirement income has the full support of all the members of this House.

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Ontario will continue to engage with other provinces and territories to join our plan.

And we will continue to encourage the federal government to do the right thing, and enhance CPP, which is still our preferred option.

In order to offer more voluntary options and promote savings, Mr. Speaker ...

We will also introduce legislation for pooled registered pension plans in the fall of 2014 that would harmonize with those being adopted across the country.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government failed to make investments in energy infrastructure, and we suffered brownouts.

Since then, we've made significant investments.

We have built 19 major new power plants, more transmission lines and new distribution systems while protecting and improving the environment.

These investments ensure that when the lights go on, they stay on.

Mr. Speaker, as a result, energy bills went up.

Now, because of our recent actions to reduce costs in the system, household bills will be \$520 less over the next five years.

As part of our plan to further help reduce bills, we will remove the debt retirement charge for households after December 31, 2015.

This will save typical families an additional \$70 per year.

And we will enhance current programs to further help those most in need.

Mr. Speaker, 60 years ago my parents came to this country for the opportunity that it brought.

They could start their own small business ... and provide a more secure future for their children.

But it went further than that.

Like many new Canadians, they were grateful and wanted to give back ... especially to others in need of support.

And I'm here today because I think it is the job of government to provide a steady hand holding the ladder to help people climb and achieve their full potential.

Beginning in July 2014, we are increasing the maximum annual Ontario Child Benefit to \$1,310, enhancing the incomes of half a million families.

As part of our plan to ensure that all Ontarians have the opportunity to succeed, and share in the benefits of a strong economy, we will also propose to index the Ontario Child Benefit to inflation.

Mr. Speaker, it is expected that the number of seniors in Ontario will double over the next two decades.

As part of this budget, we are making it easier for seniors to stay safe, active and engaged in their communities by doubling the new Seniors Community Grant Program.

This program helps seniors continue their learning in areas like technology and develop a stronger sense of social inclusion.

And Mr. Speaker, improved economic opportunities are essential to ensuring that aboriginal people can work and thrive.

In this budget, we are introducing a new Aboriginal Economic Development Fund, which will include an investment of \$25 million.

The fund will support aboriginal communities in the development of long-term economic strategies, and provide grants for aboriginal businesses and fund regional skills-training programs.

Mr. Speaker, we are also expanding low-income health benefits for children and increasing social assistance benefits.

And to help our youngest, we are expanding the Student Nutrition Program so that more children in school have access to a healthy, balanced breakfast to start their day.

Our government has also made changes to the tax system to help low- to moderate-income people with their expenses.

We have enhanced property and sales tax credits ...

And combined the payment of credits into the Ontario Trillium Benefit.

Mr. Speaker, our province has a progressive personal income tax structure where higher taxes apply as income increases.

To continue funding programs in a fair and balanced way, the province proposes that those with the greatest ability to pay contribute a little more.

In this budget, we're proposing further tax changes that would affect only the top 2% of Ontarians.

We propose that, beginning in January 2014, the taxable income threshold for the top tax rate be lowered to \$220,000, and a new rate be applied to individuals earning more than \$150,000.

That means 98% of tax filers in Ontario would see no change.

Monsieur le Président, ce budget contient des mesures qui aideraient tous les Ontariens à réussir. Il comprend également des initiatives pour souligner les Franco-Ontariens, avec la célébration du 400^e anniversaire de l'arrivée des francophones en Ontario.

And we will also be fair.

We have people working in developmental services ...

We now have more early childhood educators ...

And we've invested heavily in home care ...

Which has expanded the need for personal support workers in Ontario ...

The people doing these jobs are critically important.

In this budget, we're investing in them.

To ensure that those who care for our children, our elderly and our most vulnerable ... by properly supporting them. They deserve greater respect and reward for the important work they do, and we are going to provide that.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will also help people who want to become parents by expanding coverage of infertility services. This will help 4,000 more potential parents. Today in the gallery, Sandra David and her husband, Tony, are joining us. Because of prohibitive costs, their dream of parenthood was fading. Today we are helping make that dream a reality. Congratulations to them, and we wish you all the best.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is keeping its fiscal house in order.

We have carefully managed costs and diversified our economy.

And yet actions by the federal government have put all of our shared progress at risk.

Since 2006, the federal government has taken more than 110 unilateral actions that have hurt people and businesses across Ontario.

In addition, each year, the share of federal revenue raised in Ontario is higher than the share of federal spending in Ontario.

This has created a huge \$11-billion gap between what Ontarians pay to the federal government versus what they receive in public services.

While this money could be used in Ontario to fund more hospitals, nurses or public transit, it is redistributed

to other regions of Canada to subsidize programs and services that Ontarians themselves may not enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, no province is a more staunch supporter of our Canadian federation than Ontario, but this support cannot be taken for granted.

Our economy needs a boost, and instead we have a federal government that is harming our recovery.

In 2014-15, our province will experience a year-over-year decline of \$641 million in major transfers.

Over the last four years, the federal government paid a total of \$2.2 billion to other provinces to specifically prevent their transfers from falling.

This year, when Ontario was the only province facing a decline, the federal government ended the practice of transfer protection payments.

Mr. Speaker, that's not all.

The federal government has unilaterally changed the growth rate of the Canada Health Transfer, beginning in 2017-18.

This hurtful measure will remove an estimated \$8 billion in support for health care in Ontario in the coming decade.

As per the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer, this transferring of fiscal burden creates a fiscally sustainable federal government but fiscally unsustainable provinces and territories.

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So, Mr. Speaker, we call on the federal government to ...

Treat Ontarians the same way it treats residents of other provinces and territories.

Stop the \$641-million decline in major transfers.

Stop the delay of important infrastructure funding.

Stop unilateral actions that hurt our public services.

And partner with us in important projects, including the development of the Ring of Fire.

This area contains more than \$50 billion worth of natural minerals for the production of stainless steel.

We plan to invest \$1 billion in this project, but need the federal government as an equal partner.

Mr. Speaker, I learned at home the value of a dollar.

Nothing in our family went to waste.

We didn't spend for the sake of spending.

We made choices ...

Just like a government must.

And, in fact, once again, we are projecting to beat our deficit target by over \$400 million.

The 2013-14 deficit is now projected to be lower, at \$11.3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, our government is on track to beat the deficit target for the fifth year in a row.

This means that over the last five years, Ontario's debt is \$24 billion lower than originally projected.

At the same time, we have continued to invest in key public services.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to apply the same discipline and dedication moving forward.

Since 2010, the global economy has not been as robust as experts projected.

The federal funding cuts have hurt our province.

That means, if we don't take the measures outlined in our budget ...

Ontario's revenues would be \$3.5 billion less than projected just last year.

Mr. Speaker, we took action.

We cut expenses.

We made priority investments in growing the economy.

Thanks to prudent management of spending ...

And working together ...

With our public-sector partners ...

Ontario runs the leanest government in Canada.

We continue to have the lowest per-capita spending of any province ...

We are now moving forward with more than 80% of Don Drummond's recommendations on creating efficiencies in the public sector.

And we're surpassing expectations of savings in the system ... more than ever imagined. Even the opposition numbers don't even come close.

And we will continue to make those key investments.

As noted in the fall economic statement, the government will not jeopardize jobs and public services to meet short-term targets.

Given slower revenue growth and the federal government's cuts, the province will adjust short-term deficit targets while balancing by 2017-18.

This will allow the government to immediately strengthen the economy today and make the investments necessary to grow the economy for tomorrow.

Let me be clear: we will balance the budget by 2017-18.

We will invest where we must.

We will cut expenses where we can.

Mr. Speaker, the government rejects reckless cuts advocated by some ...

While at the same time rejecting risky ideas of others.

Instead, our government will continue to carefully review and control spending while transforming public services to improve efficiencies and outcomes.

We will continue to maintain our target of reducing Ontario's net debt-to-GDP ratio to its pre-recession level of 27%.

Mr. Speaker, we will identify new revenues where it makes sense.

For example, Ontario's small business deduction is intended to provide relief to small business ...

However, currently, all businesses, large or small, get this lower tax rate on their first \$500,000 of income.

To ensure fairness, just like other provinces and as recommended by Don Drummond, we propose to end this tax preference for the largest of corporations.

This would bring an additional \$50 million annually to be reinvested into transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we're also taking action to improve fairness and ensure that everyone pays their fair share.

The government is working on an action plan to address the underground economy.

This siphons much-needed tax dollars.

We want to level the playing field.

The plan will focus on increasing public awareness, coordinated enforcement and working with industry partners to encourage more businesses to operate accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, we are also working with the Canada Revenue Agency on enhancing compliance activities to address the underground economy.

As part of agreements signed just last year, including corporate tax avoidance, the CRA has been able to generate more than \$200 million in additional tax revenues for Ontario in 2013-14.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's public servants are the most professional ...

And dedicated ...

And talented ... in the world.

Together we are rooting out waste, focusing on priorities and making sure that every dollar spent, counts.

But there is more to do, Mr. Speaker.

That is why we will continue to review expenses through a special treasury board subcommittee.

We are targeting savings of \$250 million for 2014-15 and \$500 million for each of the next two years.

This target will focus on maintaining and enhancing the delivery of public services while reducing costs.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're also proposing to further control compensation of senior executives in the broader public sector.

Proposed legislation would allow us to establish compensation frameworks, including the use of sector-specific hard caps.

We have also introduced legislation to continue the salary freeze of members of provincial Parliament.

This began in 2009 and we propose it not end until the budget is balanced.

We are continuing to manage compensation with our partners in the broader public sector to ensure that all costs are within Ontario's existing framework.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to make agencies more accountable to further ensure that costs are controlled across government.

Making every dollar count is a key component of our 10-year economic plan.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's education system is the best in the English-speaking world.

Over the last 10 years, we've made vital investments that have laid a strong foundation.

Class sizes are smaller than they were just a decade ago ...

More kids are graduating ...

And new programs help ensure that our students are better prepared to enter the workforce once they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, full-day kindergarten will be available to all children this fall and is one of the most transformative changes to the province's school system in a generation.

Our renewed goals for education include achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence.

We will invest in new technology in the classroom and support improved student achievement ...

And within the next decade, we will have an even better education system that is the most modern in the world, and measures and promotes success from early years to adulthood.

Mr. Speaker, we are also committed to health care and a system that puts patients first and responds to their needs.

We are investing in health care services so more options are available to patients close to home, where they are most comfortable.

And we are investing billions more in major hospital expansions or redevelopment projects over the next 10 years.

This will support more than 40 projects currently under way or being planned.

Mr. Speaker, strong public services are vital to strong communities and a ... strong Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the values that guide our government are the same as those shared by Ontarians.

We know that Ontario is stronger when we're all working together, as one Ontario.

We know that when we look out and help our neighbours—we lift one another up.

And we know that to build a better quality of life for ourselves and our children and our grandchildren, we must continually move ...

Look ahead ...

And plan—not just for the times we live in—but for the decades to come.

Mr. Speaker ... we know that this next decade is one filled with opportunities to be seized ...

We know that with the right leadership ...

The right plan ...

And the experience to deliver that plan ...

This decade could see us move confidently forward in the new global economy.

That's why we will continue to be mindful of how we spend each dollar.

That's why we will continue to focus on eliminating the deficit.

That's why we will make the necessary investments to grow our economy.

This is what Ontarians demand ...

Our government will deliver.

Mr. Speaker, our 10-year plan will create a stronger Ontario.

It will build opportunities.

And secure our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I call on the opposition House leader, the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed? Agreed.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the House to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is so ordered.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUILDING OPPORTUNITY AND SECURING OUR FUTURE ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES ET ASSURANT NOTRE AVENIR (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 194, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1653 to 1658.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Will all members take their seats, please.

Mr. Sousa moves that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts and that it now be read for the first time.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Piruzza, Teresa
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Dei Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hollyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.

Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 46; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I have no statement at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I recognize the government House leader, I know the members are interested. The budget delivery time was 25.2 seconds.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We never divulge. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 5 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1703.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Brampton–Springdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Laura Albanese, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonnell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
John O'Toole, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna
Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
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